

# 10

## Its Ecstasy

### *Romans 8*

The victory described in Romans 8 is lived in the context of spiritual warfare. I submit a natural threefold outline of Paul's teachings in Romans 8: one, the ecstasy of the normal Christian life, verses 1–17a; two, the agony of the normal Christian life, verses 17b–27; three, the agony within the ecstasy of the normal Christian life, verses 28–39.

#### THE ECSTASY

The apostle Paul begins his study on the ecstasy of the normal Christian life with three of the most foundational truths about Christian living found anywhere in the New Testament. The first is the believer's union with Christ Jesus. The second is the believer's life in the Holy Spirit. The third is the interrelationship between the two, verses 1–4.

#### In Christ

The apostle first declares, "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." When I was a new believer, struggling to find victory in my Christian life, I heard the late Dr. J. Vernon McGee, then pastor of the Church of the Open Door in Los Angeles, preach on this text. The details of what he taught I have forgotten, but I have never forgotten the impact of that sermon on my life and one phrase he continually repeated.

"The most important word in the New Testament for the believer is the preposition *in*, in Christ and in the Spirit," McGee affirmed. This truth came to my parched heart like rain on arid ground. All I needed or would ever need to live the normal Christian life was already mine in the person of the indwelling Christ and His indwelling Spirit. I began a personal study of every passage in the New Testament which speaks of my union with Christ through His indwelling me in the person of the Holy Spirit (8:9).

As I prayed over the Scriptures dealing with the indwelling Christ and Holy Spirit, my life began to be transformed. While that transformation continues and will continue until I am finally with Him, the personal experience of that dual truth became a true "second blessing" or "a second work of grace" in my life.

Jesus is not only my Savior and Lord, He is my life. The Holy Spirit not only indwells me to seal me unto the day of redemption, but He also fills me with the person of God's Son. Through His gifts He empowers me for holy living and effective ministry. While many stress the one and ignore the other, the normal Christian life is both holy living and power in ministry. Both come from the indwelling Spirit of God's dear Son (Gal. 4:6).

This is why Paul insists that everything we need to overcome the evil within (the flesh), the evil without (the world), and the evil from above (evil supernaturalism) is ours in union with our Lord (Eph. 1:3–2:10; 3:14–21; Col. 1:13–3:4) through spirit (Rom. 8:1–17a). He also insists, however, that nothing is automatic or magical. If a believer does not know who he is in Christ and the Spirit and what Christ is to him as He indwells by His Spirit, that believer will be defeated most of his Christian life.

Our acceptance before God has nothing to do with our performance as Christians. It has nothing to do with the stage of victory over the flesh we are now in. It has only to do with being “in Christ Jesus.” All that needs to be done to bring us to God has already been done. No personal merit brings us to God. No personal demerit can keep us from God. If we are in Christ, we are “accepted in the beloved.” For us there is no condemnation. John Murray writes:

To be reminded of union with Christ . . . is no less pertinent than to be assured of freedom from condemnation because the potency of sin and of the flesh evident in the conflict of 7:14–25 makes it all the more necessary to appreciate the victory which belongs to the believer in the bonds of Christ Jesus. It is a succinct way of alluding to all the grace implied in the argument of the earlier passage.

Verse 2 and verse 1 are closely related. Again, both refer to our union with Christ. Murray says, “not only bound together by the particle ‘for,’ but also by the repetition in verse two of ‘in Christ Jesus.’ Verse two unfolds the implication of the union with Christ emphasized at the close of verse one.”

Dunn, writing in the *Word Biblical Commentary* on Romans, says:

It is the “in Christ” which makes the difference. To have identified oneself with Christ while still belonging to this age was bound to precipitate or increase existential tension, but that being “in Christ” is what gives the assurance that the end result will be acquittal. The “in Christ” will triumph over the “in Adam,” the tension of living between the two is temporary, the sobering realism of 7:14–25 is matched by the reaffirmed assurance of 8:1.

## Two Laws

Paul next speaks of two laws in verse 2. First there is “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.” Second, there is “the law of sin and death.” What laws are these?

“The Spirit of life” is clearly the Holy Spirit, not just an influence. The Holy Spirit is the dominant person of the Trinity mentioned in verses 4–16 and again in verses 23 and 26–27. He is called “the Spirit” who is life in verse 10. Murray says this is consistent with both “Pauline and New Testament usage. . . . The law of the spirit of life” would thus be the power of life operative in the Spirit. It is a commanding and authoritative power, because law has not only “a regulating and activating power” behind it but also a “legislative authority” behind it.

In 7:22–23 Paul mentions two opposing laws, “the law of sin” and the “law of my mind.” The law of sin operates in the flesh. The law of the mind, in the case of the believer, is also useless in itself to help the struggling Christian if it were not energized by “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.” Thus the power of sin is no match for the power of the Spirit. The believer who walks in the spirit (8:4f) is set free from “the law of sin and of death,” the law of sin which leads to death operating in his flesh.

It is important to see, therefore, that the “no condemnation” of verse 1 is not deliverance from sin’s guilt and penalty, but from sin’s power. Paul has already dealt with the former in the early chapters of Romans. Since Romans 6 he has been dealing with the believer’s deliverance from sin’s power, that is, from “the law of sin and of death.”

This view is further supported by verse 3, indeed, by all the rest of this first part of Romans 8. In verse 3 Paul speaks of the Old Testament law. It could never free us from sin's power because of the weakness of the flesh, the flesh here being human nature. God did this for us by sending His Son "in the likeness of sinful flesh—human nature which is weak and unable to do the will of God—and, as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh."

Murray repeats again that "the governing thought of this passage is concerned with deliverance from the law of sin and death, and therefore, from sin as a ruling and regulating power." Murray's discussion of this act of God in Christ by which "He made sin forfeit its dominion" over the believers is a spiritual warfare interpretation to the passage.<sup>10</sup>

Since then judicial language is applied to the destruction of the power of the world and of the prince of darkness and since the term "condemnation" is used here respecting the work of Christ, there is warrant for the conclusion that the condemning of sin in the flesh refers to the judicial judgment which was executed upon the power of sin in the cross of Christ. God executed this judgment and overthrew the power of sin; he not only declared sin to be what it was but pronounced and executed judgment upon it.

John Calvin takes a similar position. He says that "the burden of sin being laid on Christ, it was cast down from its power so that it does not hold us now subject to itself so the kingdom of sin in which it held us was demolished.

Calvin's editor writes that because of the phraseology used we should "conclude that the *power* of sin and not its *guilt* is the subject treated of."

"Law" here is used of a ruling power, for that which exercised authority and secures obedience, "the law of sin," is the ruling power of sin; "the law of the Spirit of life," is the power of the Spirit the author of life: "the law of death" is the power which death exercises. Then "walking after the flesh" is to live in subjection to the flesh as "walking after the Spirit" is to live in subjection to Him. All these things have reference to the *power* and not to the *guilt* of sin. The same subject is continued from chapter 8:5 to the 15th verse.

### **The Battle: Sin Energized by Flesh vs. the Spirit**

Thus we see that the battle in Romans 7–8:15 is warfare with the power of sin energized by the flesh of the believer. Paul's answer to the sin war we face with the flesh is the answer he also gives in Galatians, "But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh" (Gal. 5:16).

In 8:4 the apostle says that the believer does not "walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit." He says in us "those who are according to the flesh [the unredeemed] set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit [the redeemed], the things of the Spirit. For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace."

Next he describes the condition of the unregenerate. Since their mind is set on the flesh, they live in hostility to God. They do not nor cannot subject their fleshly minds to the law of God. Thus they are not nor cannot be pleasing to God (vv. 7–8).

Finally, he returns to believers who are "not in the flesh but in the Spirit." They are at war with the flesh and the flesh with them. They do not win every battle. If they did, they would never sin nor come short of any dimension of God's plan for their life. Still, they are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit. The proof? The Spirit of God dwells within them. If the Spirit of God does not dwell within them they are not regenerate (v. 9).

In verse 10 Paul says, "And if Christ is in you. . . ." What he had declared to be true of the Spirit, he now declares of the Son. This is because the Spirit is "the Spirit of Christ" (v. 9). Thus

Paul says, “If Christ is in you” (v. 10), and then “if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you” (v. 11). This is perfect unity between the Son of God and the Spirit in our life.

In verse 10, Paul, who has been affirming that the Spirit of Christ who indwells our being brings life and victory over the power of sin operating against us through the flesh, affirms that there is a part of our being where this life-giving power of the Spirit is not yet fully operative. That part of our being is our mortal body. Even though our body is God’s temple and though Christ by His Spirit dwells within our body, Paul says “the body is dead because of sin.” This is not meant to discourage us. He then states that “the spirit is alive because of righteousness.” By saying this, Paul is not declaring a negative dualism of body and spirit. Both exist together in this world, and both will be joined together in the world to come at the Resurrection (1 Cor. 15:35–37; Phil. 3:20–21).

Thus the redemption provided for the whole person is experienced in two phases. By faith our spirit is born again and receives eternal life through the indwelling Spirit of Christ, but the body does not (Rom. 8:10). This is phase one. Phase two occurs only at “the revealing of the sons of God,” at the moment of our full “adoption as sons” (vv. 19,23). Only then will the full redemptive benefits of the Cross be experienced by these sinful, mortal bodies; only then will we experience “the redemption of our body” (v. 23).

The apostle continues promising hope for this sinful body in verse 11. Verses 12–17 are a summary and application of all he has been saying until now. We are again reminded to walk in the Spirit, which I take as synonymous as “being led by the Spirit of God” (v. 14).

As to Paul’s blunt warning in verse 13a, “for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die,” Calvin rightly remarks, “Let then the faithful learn to embrace Him, not only for justification but also for sanctification, as He has been given to us for both these purposes lest they render Him asunder by their mutilated flesh.”

### **The Holy Spirit vs. Spirits of Slavery and Fear**

Verse 15 is one of the great verses of Scripture setting the “Spirit of adoption,” the Holy Spirit, over against the opposing spirit, “the spirit of slavery leading to fear.” The Spirit of God, even when He is the Spirit of conviction of sin, is always the Spirit who lets us know we belong to God and His kingdom, Paul is implying. He builds up. He encourages. He blesses. He enlightens. He makes Jesus more and more precious to us. He empowers us to the defeat of the flesh, the world, and Satan and his demons. It is he and he alone who cries within us, “Abba! Father!”

It is the other spirit who tells us lies. The writer of Hebrews says that the other spirit, Satan, is the one who binds us in fear (Heb. 2:15). We have been delivered from him, however, so we are not to fear him or his.

I am not declaring dogmatically that the apostle specifically has a demon in mind, though Dunn says he probably does. I am saying that Satan and his evil spirits are spirits of fear and bondage whether they build upon these pre-existing negative human emotions or initiate the attempted slavery themselves. Whatever binds us in fear or brings us into bondage or slavery is that other spirit.

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of liberty, of adoption. He lets us know that we belong to God. He “bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God” (v. 16). The other spirits either whisper denials of our true sonship or say we are unacceptable to God, even though we may be His sons. Thus Jesus says the other spirit is “a liar, the father of lies, whenever he speaks a lie he

speaks from his own nature” (John 8:44). When he speaks lies to us, we are to shut him up as Jesus did (Matt. 4:10; 16:23). We are to resist him with the words of truth (Eph. 6:17; James 4:7–8).

### **Crisis and Process in Full Deliverance: James’ Story**

I was counseling a troubled, out-of-town Christian by telephone. My schedule was so full a face-to-face counseling session was not possible. Yet he was hurting badly, and I felt compelled to try to minister to him by telephone.

James was a new believer who had been a practicing warlock in a local witch coven. His wife was a witch in the same group. They had one child, a young boy named Tommy, about six years old. James came from a troubled family. He was a victim of physical and sexual child abuse by his father. He grew up with a deep sense of shame, powerlessness, worthlessness, and anger. Witchcraft gave him a sense of power over others, over circumstances, and above all, over his own life.

He had had some exposure to Christianity as a youth, and he had friends who were Christians. He had gone to church with them occasionally but did not understand the Gospel. He was greatly impressed with the person of Christ but did not know how to appropriate Him for his own life.

#### *Into Witchcraft*

He met his wife while in high school. She introduced him to witchcraft. It seemed just right for him. After their marriage, he and his wife gave their lives to the spirit world. While there was “fun” in witchcraft, there were also things that disturbed his sensitive spirit. Everyone was on a power trip. Each sought to gain control over others. The spirits, while helpful to a bruised person like James, were also evil. They promoted free sex among the group. He did not like seeing his wife involved sexually with members of the group, both men and women. He felt degraded when he participated with the group in such activities.

Hate for others, particularly Christians, was a dominate feature of his coven. They were always putting curses on Christians and calling upon the spirits to harm them. Frankly, he liked a Christian co-worker who had begun to witness to him about the joy of the Christian life.

The controlling spirit of the group reminded him of the Devil he had read about and was hearing about from his Christian friend. He wondered if, unknown to him, his wife, and the other members of his coven, Satan was not manipulating them behind the scenes. As one of the coven leaders, he dared not voice his concerns, however.

#### *A Christian Witness and a Desire to Change*

One evening he, his wife, and child returned home from a particularly upsetting coven meeting characterized by expressions of deep hatred towards Christians. The spirits were upset with the group for not working harder to earn witchcraft a place of acceptance as a good “religion” which, in contrast to Christianity, stressed the values of earthly happiness, peace, and brotherhood. At the same time he recognized that they were filled with hatred against anyone who opposed them.

James voiced his concern to his wife. He also told her of his Christian co-worker and how kind, affirming, gentle, and moral he was. All his co-workers knew James’ friend was a Christian, not because he constantly preached at them or argued with them, but by his lifestyle. While he ate his bag lunch with his fellow workers, he did not participate in their dirty talk or language. He occasionally reminded them when the swearing got too bad that they were

misusing the name of his Lord, and he would firmly but gently ask them to stop. They would apologize, and their language and subjects of conversation would actually moderate when they were in his presence. James was deeply impressed with his Christian friend.

His wife was furious. “Christians are our worst enemies,” she replied. “They say we worship Satan, which is a lie. They also say their God is the true God and Jesus the only Savior. This is also a lie. There are many gods. Our religion is the answer to the needs of humanity. We don’t live for some future heaven. We enjoy life now. When we die, we become one with the spirits so we have the best of both worlds. How can you even think for a moment that your Christian friend may be right?”

### *The Break for Freedom*

One Sunday while his wife was away, James went to church with his friend. He loved the singing, the prayers, and the sermon from the Bible. Most of all he was drawn to the person of Jesus. He cried when he began to understand that God loved him so much that He would send His own Son to die for his sins.

No matter what he had been taught and was teaching others, he knew sin was real. All the sex, hatred, pride, ambition, and disrespect for one’s fellow man that his group was promoting was sin; he knew that. He wanted to get out. The pressure to continue promoting evil in the name of love was too much. He wanted to do good to all men. He wanted to be free.

Day after day at lunch break he talked with his Christian friend. One day he bowed his head, prayed, and received Jesus as his Savior. He could no longer continue calling evil good and the goodness of Christ and God, evil.

### *Ultimatum at Home*

When he told his wife she was beside herself in rage. “You always have been a weak person,” she said. “I don’t know why I ever married you. Unless you return to the coven I’m leaving you and taking Tommy with me.” They talked for hours. Rather, he tried to talk, but she railed at him, heaping insult upon insult. The next day when he returned from work she was gone. Just as she had threatened, she had taken Tommy with her.

She left no phone number where he could reach her. James called one of the leaders of the coven to see if he knew of her whereabouts. He did, but he would not tell James where she was. “You have become a Christian,” the man said. “You are a traitor. You have joined our enemies. Unless you renounce Christianity and return to the coven you will never see your wife and child again.” With that he hung up.

### *Continued Attack, Progressive Deliverance*

It was then that James began to come under demonic attack. The spirits would bombard his mind with threats and insults. They would not let him sleep at night. They confused his mind so badly he had difficulty doing his work. He was desperate. His Christian friend took him to one of the leaders of his church who was gifted at expelling evil spirits. He supposedly had special gifts of discernment which would help him identify the spirits operating in James’ life. Many demons were cast out. At first James was greatly relieved. In time, however, the demons either came back or others came to torment him. They were spirits of “slavery to fear” (Rom. 8:15). He was terrified. They threatened to kill him, and he feared they would.

At this point, James called me to help him get rid of his fears and bondage to the accusing spirits. Instead, I went through the Scriptures with him to help him understand who he was in Christ. I wanted him to recognize that Satan was already defeated by the Son of God in his

behalf. I told him that though the Devil might not immediately and totally back off, he would eventually have to cease his accusations and fear tactics. He always does. He has no choice in the matter (James 4:7–8).

I call this pre-deliverance counseling. It would have been ineffective just to try to cast demons out of a life so severely demonized with powerful demons of witchcraft, fear, and bondage. Because he had been into witchcraft for years, including several years as a warlock, his deliverance was not instant, but progressive.

### *Full Deliverance*

On more than one occasion the demons came into manifestation while we were talking by phone. I would bring them into subjection and continue with the scriptural counseling. James faithfully studied Dr. Mark Bubeck's book, *The Adversary*. He began to do Doctrinal and Warfare Praying.

He purchased and carefully followed my 16 audio-cassette tape series with accompanying study syllabus called *Spiritual Warfare*. Eventually he began to sense the demons releasing their hold on his life and in his mind. While it took several months, the final self-deliverance occurred all at once one night while James was alone in bed. He suddenly became aware of the exodus of the last of the bondage spirits. They screamed their protest in his mind, "This is not fair. You belonged to us, but we have to go. Jesus is saying we must leave you right now. This is not fair. This is not fair."

With that they left.

As James drew near to the Lord in worship, prayer, and thanksgiving, the Lord drew near to him (James 4:7–8). Never had he experienced such a sense of the Lord's presence. *He was finally free*. He now understood Paul's words, "For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit [the Holy Spirit] of adoption as sons by which we cry out, 'Abba! Father!' (Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6). James now knew for sure that he was both a child of God, an heir of God, and joint heir with Christ (v. 17). He knew that his sufferings were sufferings with Christ. All were meant for his good. He also knew that some day he would "be glorified with Him" (vv. 16–17).

This is an overview of Paul's teachings on the ecstasy of the normal Christian life. While some agony is involved, the focus is on ecstasy, the freedom from the law of sin and death through the indwelling Christ and His Holy Spirit. Our next chapter deals with Paul's overview of the agonies of the normal Christian life.

# 11

## Its Agony

### *Romans 8*

Paul's treatment in Romans 8 of the agony of the normal Christian life begins with the statement in verse 17 that the Christian life is a life of suffering with Christ and continues through verse 27. The contrast between this portion of Romans 8 and the prior portion (vv. 1–17a) is remarkable. That is why I call verses 1–17a the Ecstasy of the Normal Christian Life and this second portion the Agony of the Normal Christian Life.

If the apostle had halted his treatment of the normal Christian life with the “ecstasy” presentation, he would have been less than realistic, even in terms of his own Christian life. When he reaches the point of the greatest of all ecstasies of the Christian life, that of our real status as “heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ,” he begins treating the agony of suffering (v. 17b).

### **Suffering With Glory**

The apostle, always one to encourage, makes one of the most comforting statements in all of the Bible regarding our suffering with Christ. I like the NEB translation, “For I reckon that the sufferings we now endure bear no comparison with the splendor that is as yet unrevealed, which is in store for us.”

John Murray notes that

this verse is an appeal to the great disproportion between the sufferings endured in this life and the weight of glory reserved for the children of God—the present sufferings fade into insignificance when compared with the glory to be revealed in the future. The apostle appeals to this consideration an inducement to patient endurance of sufferings.

In 8:18–27 Paul mentions three groanings: the groaning universe or the natural creation (vv. 18–22); the groaning church (vv. 23–25); and the groaning Holy Spirit (vv. 26–27).

The apostle here personifies the physical creation, comparing it to a woman in the pangs of childbirth (v. 22). The universe is anxiously longing for “the revealing of the sons of God” (v. 19). As it was made to participate in the negative effects of humanity's fall, not by its own will but by the will of God (v. 20), it will also participate in the positive effects of redeemed humanity's entrance into “the freedom of the glory of the children of God” (v. 21). The church (that is, the children of God) and the creation groan together, waiting eagerly for the same things—“our adoption as sons” (vv. 22–23a).

This adoption is totally different than that already experienced by the children of God (Gal. 4:5; Eph. 1:4–5), though not unrelated. The adoption already entered into is spiritual: It does not include as yet the physical body (v. 15). The adoption for which we still wait is “the redemption of our body” (v. 23b). This will only occur at “the last trumpet” for both those dead in Christ and for those who are alive at His coming (1 Cor. 15:50–57; 2 Thess. 4:13–18).

### **The Spirit Intercedes**

While we and creation groan, waiting for the day when our bodies will be redeemed (v. 23), and we will be revealed for what we already are—“the sons of God” (v. 19), another groaning is occurring: the “Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words” (v. 26).

There is no end to suggested interpretations of this verse. Many have much to commend them. In my opinion, however, the one that is most objectionable is the one which declares that the Spirit's intercession “for us with groanings too deep for words” refers to praying in tongues. If this were so we would have to affirm that Jesus never prayed in the Holy Spirit, for He is never recorded as speaking or praying in tongues. This would also mean that when one prays with the mind (1 Cor. 14:14–19), that is, with the full use of his faculties, which is characteristic

of all prayers recorded in Scripture, he is not praying in the Holy Spirit. If not, then he is praying in the flesh. Such a conclusion would be totally repugnant to most Christians.

Also, this would mean that Christians who do not have what is commonly called “a prayer language” do not have this benefit of the Spirit interceding for them “with groanings too deep for words.” That means most of the Christians who have ever lived were deprived of what Paul here ascribes as a ministry of the Spirit in behalf of all believers, for most did not have a “prayer language.”

John Calvin says the correct interpretation has to fit the context:

[Paul] brings before them the aid of the Spirit, which is abundantly sufficient to overcome all difficulties. There is then no reason for anyone to complain, that the bearing of the cross is beyond their own strength, since we are sustained by a celestial power. And there is great force in the Greek word (used here) which means that the Spirit takes on Himself a part of the burden . . . so that He not only helps and succours us, but lifts us up as though He went under the burden with us.

### **Weaknesses and Sufferings**

His editor remarks that the word for *weakness* “is taken metaphorically from assistance afforded to infants not able to support themselves, or to the sick, tottering and hardly able to walk.” A beautiful picture indeed! “Weakness” (v. 26) is plural, indicating the great variety of burdens and sufferings (agonies) we feel. Calvin comments:

For as experience shows, that except we are supported by God’s hands, we are soon overwhelmed by innumerable evils. Paul reminds us, that . . . there is yet sufficient protection in God’s Spirit to preserve us from falling and to keep us from being overwhelmed by any mass of evils.

These weaknesses and suffering are not meant to break us down, but to cause us to look upwards. They make deep, heartfelt prayer as necessary as our daily bread. They tend to have a twofold possible effect upon the elect, however. Response to them can make some burdened hearts become harder, bitter, and complaining. In others, they bring us to God in heartfelt prayer.

We are often baffled about how or what we should pray. All we can do is come into His presence on our faces, weeping and confused. Words totally fail us. They seem completely limited in expressing our crushed spirit or troubled heart. No matter, the apostle says, the Spirit “intercedes for us with groanings too deep for [our] words.”

His intercession, we must be assured, always reaches the Father’s heart. God is always searching “the hearts” to understand our cries. At the same time, He knows the mind of the Spirit because what He intercedes for us is always according to the will of God (v. 27).

Later in this epistle Paul tells us that Jesus is at the right hand of God interceding for us (v. 34). Here Paul shows us the indwelling Spirit interceding for us from deep within us. How then can our prayer ever fail or our true needs ever go without being met? Before His throne and within our hearts God is interceding to God in our behalf. What an amazing life is this Christian life! In the midst of our agonies we must always contemplate the ecstasies.

### **THE AGONY WITHIN THE ECSTASY**

The two words *agony* and *ecstasy* well describe the dramatic line of teaching found in these Romans 8:28–39. Almost every facet of God’s redemption in Christ and the spiritual warfare we face in living out that redemption is found here.

Paul first begins with God’s eternal sovereign purpose to glorify all his elect (vv. 28–30). What do we know? “We know that God causes all things to work together for good . . .” (v. 28a).

For whom is this true? “To those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose” (v. 28b).

How do we know what we know?

1. *God has foreknown us.* The subject of God’s foreknowledge is a subject of endless controversy. Does it simply mean God knows beforehand what will happen, that is, is it the same as God’s omniscience; or does it mean God has ordained beforehand what will come to pass?

I believe, in spite of the intellectual problems involved, the weight of evidence comes down strongly upon the latter view. As John Murray says, “to ‘know beforehand’ is to know with peculiar regard and love from before the foundation of the world (cf. Eph. 1:4) and ‘foreknew’ (Rom. 8:29) can have the persons as direct object with no further qualification.”

2. *God has “predestined [us] to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren.”* It is to conformity “to the image of His Son” that He has predestined us, not just to escape hell and gain heaven. Jesus, while always in a different and higher category than his brethren, is to be the leader of many “Jesuses,” men and women who bear His image.

3. *Those “He predestined, these He also called.”* That is what it means to be the elect of God. God called us to His Son and to Himself, or we could not have come to Him at all (John 6:37–40, 44, 64–65).

4. *“Whom He called, these He also justified.”* God has fully imputed His righteousness to His elect.

5. *These “whom He justified, these He also glorified”* (v. 30). Calvin comments that Paul speaks to us as believers, all of whom “are now pressed down by the cross” so that we may know that His Cross also leads to our glorification. We do not have that glorification yet. Only He does. Yet, Calvin says, “His glory brings to us such assurance respecting our own glory that our hope may be justly compared to a present possession.”

Calvin then comments that Paul uses the past tense for all of these blessings. His editor comments, “Paul speaks of these things as past, because they are as already done in God’s decree, and in order to show the certainty of their accomplishment.”

### **Certainty of Our Calling**

Next Paul emphasizes the certainty of our calling by God (from foreknowing us to our glorification) with a series of seven rhetorical questions, all of which begin with the words *what? who? how? and shall?* (vv. 31–39).

*“What then shall we say to these things?”* In other words, since we have been foreknown, predestined, called, justified, and glorified, what more can God do for us to assure us that He is directing all the good, and also the evil, which comes to our life for our good and His purpose (vv. 28–32a)?

*“Who is against us” since God is for us?* (v. 31b) Are there people who are against us? In such circumstances, how unimportant they are since God is for us! Is evil supernaturalism totally against us? Of course it is, but what can Satan and his evil spirits really do against us? They can hassle, afflict, threaten, scare, bruise, but they cannot really hurt us. God uses them eventually to help us.

We all become weary in the battle and often complain, “I am tired of the pressure Satan continually brings against me.” When that happens, we can counter his attack by turning against Satan and his demons and declaring our acceptance by God (v. 31b) in the beloved (Eph. 1:3–8); their defeat by the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords (John 12:31–32); our authority in

Christ's power over them (Luke 10:17–19); and their destiny in hell, the eternal lake of fire (Matt. 25:41; Rev. 20:10). I believe that is the meaning of resisting the Devil until he flees (James 4:7–8).

When we resist in such a manner we are fulfilling Ephesians 3:10 and Revelation 12:11. There Paul and John affirm:

That the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places. (Eph. 3:10)

And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even to death. (Rev. 12:11)

*How would He fail to “give us all things” that we need to live the normal Christian life?* Look at what He has done for us! He did not spare His own Son on our behalf. He “delivered Him up for us all” (v. 32). How could He fail to give us all else that we need to live the life He commands us to live?

*“Who will bring a charge against God’s elect?”* That charge can come from only three possible sources: from others, from ourselves, and from Satan. Satan is the main one to charge or accuse us (Zech. 3:1–3; Rev. 12:10). He not only does so before God but before our own damaged emotions and conscience, and he uses others to accuse us as well. Paul answers, “God is the one who justifies.” He has already justified all of His own (vv. 29–30). So all other condemnation is pure rubbish. It holds no merit before God and should hold no merit before us.

*Who is the one who condemns?* Paul gives a fourfold answer which removes all ground for Satan’s or anyone else’s condemning God’s own:

1. “Christ Jesus is He who died” for God’s own. Calvin says, “As no one by accusing can prevail when the judge absolves, so there remains no condemnation when satisfaction is given . . . and the penalty is paid.”
2. “Yes, rather who was raised.” Paul’s argument here is that Jesus’ sacrifice of His life to justify His elect was all that God’s law demanded. He raised Him from the dead as “the conqueror of death, and triumphed over all its power.”
3. “Who is at the right hand of God.” Christ at the place of glory, power, and dominion—that is, at the right hand of God—is one of Paul’s joyful themes (Eph. 1:20; Col. 3:1–4; Heb. 1:3, 8–13; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2). He is Lord! He rules! He reigns! All authority is given Him in heaven and on earth! Read Hebrews 1:3,8–13 to see Him through the eyes of the Father and verse 6 through the eyes of the angels. Paul declares in Ephesians 2:6, We are seated “with Him in the heavenly places.” Who dares condemn us?
4. “Who also intercedes for us.” In other words, His very presence before the throne of God, at the right hand of God in our behalf, is itself an eternal intercession in our behalf.

Dunn calls all of this “the courtroom metaphor.”

The risen Christ pleads His sacrificial death before the Judge on behalf of those who have died with Him. . . . The verdict of acquittal or condemnation lies wholly with God alone. God’s commitment to His own in Christ is how His acquittal comes to effect. . . . The Judge’s own “Right Hand Man” is on our side, a more powerful, and more favored advocate than *any* who may plead against Him. . . . The success of His advocacy over that of any challenge is assured since His resurrection and exaltation to God’s right hand was God’s own doing. . . .

How blessed! How comforting! Who dares condemn us when He appears in God’s presence for us? Satan, fool as he is, tries to do so but all in vain (Rev. 12:10). As for his demons, when the Father raised Jesus from the dead and seated him at His own right hand, it was “after angels

and authorities and powers had been subjected to Him” (1 Pet. 3:22). This includes all of Satan’s fallen angels of all classes as well as God’s angels who joyfully submit to Him (Heb. 1:3–14).

“*Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?*” (v. 35). The expression “the love of Christ” is rare in Scripture. It is usually the love of God which is in focus (v. 39). Why is it used here?

While Paul does not say, one can venture a guess. In verses 33–34 the focus has been upon God’s giving His Son to die for us, to be raised for us, to be glorified for us, and to intercede for us. Now Paul wants us to see Christ’s love for us in all of this. In fact he will continue to feature not only God’s love, but Jesus’ love for us to the end of this chapter.

Jesus Himself had said that no one, not even the Father, took His life from Him. He laid it down of His own accord (John 10:18). Paul now tells us why He laid down His life for us: He loves us. If the believer allows that truth to penetrate his heart, mind, soul, emotions, indeed his very being, he will never be the same. The great theologian Karl Barth was once asked by a friend what was the greatest theological truth ever to enter his mind. He quickly answered,

Jesus loves me,  
This I know,  
For the Bible  
Tells me so.

“*Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?*” Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril or sword?

Calvin comments that Paul

preferred ascribing personality to things without life, and for this end—that he might send forth with us into the contest as many champions as there are of temptations to try our faith.

As he had personified the creation which fell in man’s fall and groans with the church’s groaning, so Paul now personifies the things that try our faith so severely. Look at them. Think of what they have done, are doing, and will yet do to our faith and the faith of our loved ones. What an evil list!

Tribulations  
Distress  
Persecution  
Famine  
Nakedness  
Peril  
Sword

Shall any separately or all of these together separate us from the love of Christ? No, Paul says. In the midst of experiencing any or all of them, we “are more than conquerors through Him who loved us” (v. 37, NKJV). Yet, while going through them we usually feel that He has forsaken us.

### **Perpetua and Felicitas**

Consider the story of the martyrdom of the 22-year-old Roman aristocrat, Perpetua, and her slave girl, Felicitas. It is told in a third-century writing called *The Passion of Perpetua and Felicitas*. Their faithfulness to Christ never ceases to stir my heart. The following paraphrase and quotations are taken from Ruth Tucker’s exciting book *From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya*.

Vibia Perpetua was the mother of an infant son. She and her personal slave, Felicitas, who was eight months pregnant, were imprisoned in the Roman city of Carthage, North Africa. Their imprisonment occurred under the rule of Emperor Septimus Severus, the vile emperor who launched the first empire-wide persecution of Christians in A.D. 202. Tucker says, “The emperor himself worshiped Serapis, an Egyptian god of the dead, and he feared Christianity was a threat to his own religion.”

Christianity was growing rapidly in Carthage at the time, and the persecution there was the most intense in all the Roman Empire. Perpetua, Felicitas, three men, and their leader, a deacon named Saturus, were arrested. Perpetua’s father, a respected nobleman, endured distress and humiliation when he “was informed that his only daughter had been arrested and imprisoned as a common criminal. He came and pleaded with her to renounce the new faith . . . [and] she refused.” When he later heard that Perpetua was to be thrown into a public arena with wild beasts, he came to the prison and tried forcibly to rescue her. He failed and was beaten by the Roman officials. Perpetua wrote, “I was grieved by my father’s plight as if I had been struck myself.” Again he pled with her to consider the shame and suffering she was bringing upon her family and to renounce her Christian faith. She responded, “This will be done on the scaffold which God has willed, for I know that we have not been placed in our own power but in God’s.”

Perpetua’s greatest sufferings while in prison awaiting her execution were due to her anxiety for her family and especially for her infant son. She said she was “racked with anxiety” almost to the breaking point. Permission was finally given for her baby to be with her in prison until the day of her death. She wrote, “At once I recovered my health, relieved as I was of my worry and anxiety over the child.”

When the day of their execution drew near, the condemned believers met for prayer and to share an *agape* love feast, “more concerned about their worthiness, their loyalty to Christ than about the suffering ahead of them.” Perpetua and Felicitas had already experienced five of the seven worst evils mentioned by Paul: tribulation, distress, persecution, famine (prison food was just enough to keep them alive), and peril. They were soon to experience the last two sources of trials, nakedness and the sword.

The men were first tortured for the entertainment of the crowd before their execution “by being mauled by ‘a bear, a leopard and a wild boar.’ Finally they were put to death. The two women were saved for last.”

Perpetua and Felicitas, who had given birth to her baby in prison, were stripped (nakedness) and sent into the arena to face a mad heifer. The gory torture soon became too much for the crowd and the people began shouting, “Enough.”

When this preliminary exhibition was ended, the young women were brought to the executioner, at which time Perpetua called out to some grieving Christian friends, “Give out the word to the brothers and sisters; stand fast in the faith, love one another, and don’t let suffering become a stumbling block to you.”

She was taken to the gladiator to be beheaded. . . . His first blow was not sufficient. Perpetua cried out in pain, and took the gladiator’s trembling hand and directed the sword to her throat and it was over.

Tucker says that this ended the wave of persecution in Carthage. The church continued to grow steadily, however. Many were attracted to the faith by the serenity and courage of Perpetua and her companions. Even Pudens, the prison governor, later turned to Christ and became a martyr for Christ.

Young Perpetua and Felicitas experienced all seven of these curses for Christ. Did they feel that God had abandoned them? That they had been separated from Christ? No. They knew with

Paul that, “For thy sake we are being put to death all day long; We were considered as sheep to be slaughtered” (v. 36).

Paul’s climactic note to all the agonies of our Christian life is the ecstatic cry, “But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through him who loved us” (v. 37). Bible translators and commentators struggle to grasp the full power of Paul’s triumphant exclamation in this verse. Williams translates, “And yet in all these things we keep on gloriously conquering.” PHILLIPS translates the phrase, “No, in all these things we win an overwhelming victory.”

### THE ECSTASY WITHIN THE AGONY

Finally come two of the most powerful verses of testimony to victory in spiritual warfare found anywhere in Scripture:

For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Rom. 8:38–39)

“‘For I am convinced,’ ” John Murray says, “is an express declaration of the confidence entertained respecting the impossibility of separation from the love of Christ.” William Barclay in his characteristic style says, “So Paul goes on with a poet’s fervor and a lover’s rapture to sing of how nothing can separate us from the love of God in our risen Lord.”<sup>14</sup>

The nine expressions listed in Romans 8:38–39 are meant to universalize in the most emphatic way that nothing shall separate us from the love of Christ. They are also meant to reinforce the dogmatic declaration that we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us.

Several of the expressions occur in pairs, the one expression being the opposite of the other: “death—life; things present—things to come; height—depth.” Others are not so constituted but provide vivid imagery of powers greater than all human powers, such as “angels—principalities—powers.” Finally, Paul exhausts all other possibilities by saying, “nor any other created thing.”

*The first pair, “neither death nor life.”*

Barclay says, “In life we live with Christ, in death we die with Him; and because we die with Him, we also rise with Him, and death so far from being a separation is only a step into His nearer presence. Death is not the end, it is only ‘the gate of the skyline leading to the presence of Christ.’ ”

*The second pair, “nor angels nor principalities.”*

One interpretation of this pair is that they both refer to God’s angels. Thus the two expressions do not reveal “a pair, the one expression the opposite of the other.” Both refer to God’s angels (including perhaps “powers”).

A second interpretation is that they, like “death, nor life,” are an opposing pair. “Angels” refers to God’s elect angels of all classes while “principalities” refer to fallen angels of all classes.

A third view is more agnostic. It affirms that we do not know if Paul was actually trying to contrast good angelic powers and evil angelic powers in his use of “angels” and “principalities” and later “powers.” All we do know is that none of these supernatural, created beings can separate us from the love of God in Christ.

James D. G. Dunn represents the more agnostic position. He says that we cannot say for sure what Paul had in mind when he speaks of angels and principalities (and later “powers”). We do

not know the detail of Paul's views concerning the essential differences between angels which were good angels and those angels which were evil. All we do know is, whatever be the case, none of these created, disembodied, supernatural spirits can separate us from the love of God in Christ.

Paul uses terms which would embrace the complete range of spiritual forces, however conceived—good or evil, every possibility and eventuality is included (as with death and life). . . . His concern, here, however, is pastoral rather than speculative. Whatever names his readers give to the nameless forces which threaten the Creator's work and purpose, they are in the end impotent before Him who is God over all.

Since we are in an area of opinion, I will give mine. I believe Dunn is correct. In this verse the apostle is dealing with the normal Christian life. Thus he declares that nothing in the universe can ever "separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (v. 39b). If, hypothetically speaking, angels were to attempt that separation (Gal. 1:8)—and they don't—they would fail. If demonic powers were to attempt to do so—and they do—they too would fail. He is not here speaking hypothetically, however, because as Paul teaches elsewhere, such a goal would be consistent with demonic purposes.

The former Archdeacon of London and Canon of St. Paul's Cathedral, the Rev. E. H. Gifford, wrote a book on Romans first published in 1886. He says, "St. Paul's familiarity with Hebrew poetry" led him to outline ten possible sources that threaten to separate the believer from God. He puts them in poetic form, numbering each source as recorded below.

1

2

Neither death, nor life

3

4

Nor angels, nor principalities

5

6

Nor things present, nor things to come

7

Nor powers,

8

9

Nor height, nor depth

10

Nor any other creature.

This is a beautiful arrangement. Gifford himself holds the more agnostic view.

In our present passage *angels* and *principalities* must both have the widest possible application: the point in question is not the moral disposition, whether good or evil, but the power of the angelic order of created things.

He then states the distinction between angels and principalities is not a moral distinction but only a distinction in rank. "Principalities are angels of greater power and might" (Eph. 6:12; 2 Peter 2:11). His entire discussion of these verses is worth studying.

*The third pair, "nor things present nor things to come."*

Here we have a linear dimension: time. Paul is as human as the rest of us. He knows that the past is past. Even though it does affect us in the present and the future, we cannot really change the past. What happens in the present and the future does cause us true apprehension, however.

Nothing that is presently occurring or will yet occur and nothing in the uncertain future can separate us from God's love in Christ Jesus our Lord. There is a further word worth considering here, however. William Barclay says, "*no age in time* can separate us from Christ." He reminds us of the Jewish view of time. The Jews divided all time into this present age and the age to come. Thus according to Barclay, Paul is saying that "In this present world nothing can separate us from God in Christ; the day will come when this world will be shattered and the new age will dawn. It does not matter; even then, when this world has passed and the new world come, the bond is still the same."

*The fourth element is "powers."*

"Powers" seems isolated from the rest. It probably is to be connected to the second pair, unless the apostle has something else in mind which commentators have not been able to understand as yet. I do not see why it cannot be seen as he uses it consistently in Ephesians and Colossians for high-level cosmic powers of evil. While not being dogmatic, I believe that is what Paul has in mind.

*The fifth pair is "nor height nor depth."*

Dunn says Paul is "deliberately drawing on current astronomical terms to denote the full sweep of the heavens visible and invisible to the human eye." He also affirms that this would include "all astrological powers known and unknown which could be thought to determine and control the fate and destiny of human beings. Whatever force they might bring to bear on believers, the love of God is greater still."<sup>23</sup>

*The final words, “nor any other thing.”*

Romans 8 is like a sermon, a poem, or a piece of beautiful prose, as it reasons towards its climax in this final word of Paul’s. Like a choir, the words build in ever-growing crescendo and beauty until they reach this final word, “nothing in all of creation shall ever be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” All that needs to be added is, “Amen.”

Murray’s, Dunn’s, and Barclay’s comments are worth noting, however. Murray says, “this concluding negation is for the purpose of leaving no loophole—no being or thing in the whole realm of created reality is excluded.” Dunn says,

Lest any thing or power within reality could be said to have been omitted from the above list, Paul rounds it off with an all-embracing addendum. Since God alone is creator and since God is one, any other creature means everything else! Nothing, but nothing, can separate from “God’s love in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Barclay writes that

here is a vision to take away all loneliness and fear. Paul is saying, “You can think of every terrifying thing that this or any other world can produce. Not one of them is able to separate the Christian from the love of God which is in Jesus Christ, who is Lord of every terror and master of every world. Of what shall we be afraid?”

Dunn concludes his commentary on Romans 8:

In this mystery—God for us in Christ Jesus, the crucified as Lord—lies the heart of Paul’s assurance. This towering confidence rests foursquare on Christ, on God’s commitment to His own in Christ and on their commitment to this Christ as Lord, Master and determiner of all. With this much said, no more need be said, and both chorus and soloist fall silent.

E. H. Gifford writes that Romans 8:31–39 “is a noble hymn of victory (which) while growing out of its immediate context (vv. 28–30), and having a primary reference to the sure triumph of them that love God, forms at the same time a grand conclusion to the whole doctrinal portion of the Epistle.” He quotes Godet.

It is the crown of that edifice of salvation in Christ, of which St. Paul had laid the foundation in his demonstration of the righteousness of faith (1–5) and raised the superstructure in his exposition of sanctification (6–8). After this it will only remain for us to see this salvation thus studied in its essence, unfold itself upon the stage of history.

That salvation can only unfold itself “on the stage of history” as the people of God demonstrate their abundant and conquering Christian life to an incredulous and doubting public.

### **A Passion for Purity and Power**

While living in this world we are continually grieved at the spread of sin and lawlessness. We yearn that His kingdom “will come” and that His will shall be done “as in heaven also on earth” (Matt. 6:9, literal translation). We know this will never be fully realized until God makes new heavens and a new earth, where only righteousness dwells. Thus we long for His coming. In the meantime, we seek to be “blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation among whom [we] appear as lights in the world” (Phil. 2:15). In essence, that is the abundant but normal Christian life (John 10:10b).

Rev. Keith Benson, missionary in Argentina since 1957, labors in the interior of that vast country where God is presently moving in such mighty power after years of awful resistance to the Spirit of God. The area where Keith is laboring is the center of indigenous, demonic worship called Difunta Correa. “Superstition, lust, demonism, and spiritism is the daily experience,” he

writes. He recently wrote me a letter which expresses well the burden to see Christians truly live an abundant life of holiness and power.

My burden—in a word—is evangelism with holiness. I long that people get converted because they see the holiness of God, and not merely because they have a need. May they feel their need of holiness, is my prayer, my burden.

I read that Ghandi once said,

I like your Christ but I don't like your Christians.

May God work so deeply in our lives that people who know us will say,

I like your Christ and I am inspired by your Christians.<sup>1</sup>

**8:1** See section 5 of Truth-In-Action at the end of Rom.

**8:1** Paul begins a description of life in the **Spirit**. He first declares that the Spirit assures victory and makes holiness possible.

**8:1** Therefore: Because of the fact of salvation by faith alone, explained in 3:21-7:25, but especially picking up the major outline of Christ's redemptive work in 3:21-26 and 5:6-21, Christians are free from God's banishing judgment.

## KINGDOM DYNAMICS

**8:2 Names/Symbols of the Holy Spirit, SPIRITUAL GIFTS.** The Holy Spirit is given several different names and symbols in Scripture. In this chapter, He is referred to as the Spirit of life (v. 2), the Spirit of God (v. 9), the Spirit of Christ (v. 9), and the Spirit of adoption (v. 15). An elaboration of this and related themes appears in the study article, "Holy Spirit Gifts and Power."

**8:2** The law here does not refer to God's written moral commands in the OT (as in 7:12), but to the system of operation that the **Spirit of life**, the Holy Spirit, carries out in our lives, breaking the dominion of the old **law** (principle) **of sin and death**.

**8:3** Though given by God, **the law** (the written code in the OT) was powerless to enable people to meet its demands because it had to depend on sinful human nature to carry them out. **In the likeness of sinful flesh:** The human nature of Jesus was real, but sinless (see Phil. 2:7, 8; Heb. 2:17; 4:15; 1 Pet. 2:22).

**8:4** Paul presents two ways of life, and they are central to the whole discussion until v. 17. To **walk according to the flesh** is to follow the sinful desires of one's old life. To walk **according to the Spirit** is to follow the desires of the Holy Spirit, to live in a way pleasing to Him.

**8:5** Paul expects that Christians ordinarily will live **according to the Spirit**. This involves holiness, not only in actions and words, but also in the thoughts that fill our minds each moment through the day.

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<sup>1</sup> Murphy, E. F. (1996). [\*Handbook for spiritual warfare\*](#) (pp. 77–87). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

**8:7** See section 3 of Truth-In-Action at the end of Rom.

**8:8** Those who are in the flesh characterizes people's very nature and is a stronger description than the activity of walking according to the flesh. The phrase therefore refers to unbelievers who **cannot please God**. This situation is not true of believers, as the following verse shows.

**8:9** He is not His: All Christians have the Holy Spirit within them. Anyone who does not have the Holy Spirit within is not a Christian. Though Paul says that Christians are **in the Spirit**, he also warns that they can from time to time live "according to the flesh" (v. 13).

**8:12** To live according to the flesh: See note on v. 4. Although Paul does not state it, the implication is that we are debtors to the Spirit, to live according to the Spirit.

**8:13** See section 5 of Truth-In-Action at the end of Rom.

**8:13** See note on 6:16. Paul lays out two directions of life and shows their ultimate consequences. He implies that Christians have an ability to choose to do what is uncharacteristic of a Christian, namely, to walk "according to the flesh," and he warns them not to do it. **If by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body:** A good summary of the process of sanctification (growth in holiness) in the Christian life. We are actively to work at growing in holiness and "putting to death" any sin in our hearts or minds, as well as in our words and deeds. Yet, in spite of the fact that we actively put forth effort, Paul reminds us that it is only "by the Spirit," that is, by the Holy Spirit's power, that we can succeed.

**8:14** The phrase **as many as are led by the Spirit of God** is more than a synonym for Christians. It describes the life-style of those who are **sons of God**. Paul is giving encouragement *not* to live according to the flesh *but* to put to death the deeds of the body (v. 13). Therefore, being "led by the Spirit of God" involves progressively putting to death the sinful appetites of the lower nature. This implies that, while all Christians are in some general sense being "led by the Spirit of God," there are increasing degrees of being led by the Spirit. The more fully people are led by the Holy Spirit, the more completely will they be obedient to God and be conformed to His holy standards.

Since the Greek word translated **led** is a present participle, it may be translated, "as many as are *continually being led* by the Spirit of God." This leading is not to be restricted to objective knowledge of the commands of Scripture and conscious effort to obey them (though it most certainly includes that). Rather, it more fully includes the subjective factor of being sensitive to the promptings of the Holy Spirit throughout the day, promptings that if genuinely from the Holy Spirit will never encourage us to act contrary to Scripture.

What one perceives to be a subjective leading of the Holy Spirit, especially in major decisions or promptings for "unusual" actions, should be subjected to the confirmation of several counselors (Prov. 11:14; 24:6) to help guard against mistakes and to help get a clear picture of Scripture's objective standards.

**8:15** The Holy Spirit grants us subjective assurance **that we are children of God**. **Abba** is the Aramaic word for **Father**.

**8:17** The Spirit guarantees glory.

**8:17** Scripture often indicates that God leads His children through suffering before they reach His glory.

**8:18** In us may also be translated "to us."

**8:19** Physical **creation** will be redeemed at the consummation of our redemption (see v. 21).

**8:20** The whole created universe has suffered the consequences of human sin, being **subjected** to decomposition, futility and corruption. However, that process of deterioration is only temporary, because God has provided **hope** of deliverance.

**8:21** At the time of our final redemption (v. 23), **creation itself** will be set free from enslavement to decay and will share our glory.

**8:23** Just as **the firstfruits** of a harvest are a pledge of the full crop to come, the Holy Spirit is the pledge of our full adoption as God's children, when our bodies are redeemed. The metaphor also suggests that the Holy Spirit is the foretaste of the life to come (see Eph. 1:14). We **groan** because although our souls are saved, our bodies are still subject to pain and sin. However, we look forward with hope (v. 24) to our resurrection bodies, which will be free from physical frailty and indwelling sin (see 1 Cor. 15:50-54).

**8:26** The Greek word translated **helps** is used in Luke 10:40, where Martha wants Mary to come and *help* her. The word does not indicate that the Holy Spirit prays *instead of* us, but that the Holy Spirit takes part *with* us and makes our weak prayers effective. Some interpret the **groanings** as those uttered by the Holy Spirit, since the text says that He uses these groanings to make intercession. Others see Paul referring to our "groanings" in prayer, since: 1) v. 23 says that "we ourselves groan"; 2) such "groanings," which seem to imply a degree of distress or anguish, are appropriate for creatures (vv. 22, 23), but not for the Creator; 3) this sentence explains the first sentence in v. 26, which says that the Spirit "helps" us, not that the Spirit replaces our prayers.

The expression **which cannot be uttered** does not necessarily mean "silent," but can rather mean "not able to be put into words."

If v. 26 refers to "groanings" of the Holy Spirit, which we cannot hear, then the verse simply gives encouragement that the Holy Spirit prays for us and adds effective prayer when we do not pray effectively. But if, as seems more likely, the verse refers to our "groanings" in prayer, then it means that those sighs, groans, loud "cries and tears" (Heb. 5:7), and other expressions of our hearts and spirits in prayer are taken by the Holy Spirit and made into effectual intercession before the throne of God.

Paul is speaking in this verse about the prayer life of Christians generally, and is not specifically discussing the question of speaking in tongues. But there are similarities between speaking in tongues and the activity Paul describes here, for speaking in tongues is often prayer or praise in syllables the speaker does not himself understand (1 Cor. 14:2), and both kinds of speech are made effective by the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:4; 1 Cor. 12:10, 11; 14:15; Eph. 6:18; Jude 20).

**8:28** Even in hardship and suffering, even in bitter disappointments, even when wrongly treated, Christians can know that God will work amidst such situations to fulfill His good **purpose** in His children. The situation may or may not be directly changed by God, but even if situations stay difficult God guarantees ultimate good results, including maturation of character **to those who are the called**. (Note: The certainties of this verse must be kept in union with the responsible participation into which we enter with the Holy Spirit, described in vv. 26, 27.)

**8:29** The conjunction **for** introduces the reason for the assurance of v. 28. Paul looks to eternity past and sees that God's purpose for His people has only been good: He **foreknew** and **predestined** believers to be like Christ. Then he looks to the recent past and sees that God **called**

and **justified** His people. Finally, Paul looks to the distant future and finds that God’s plan is to glorify, that is, to give a resurrection body to all who have been justified. (**Glorified** is used as a “prophetic perfect,” speaking of a future event as if it were already done, because it is certain that God will do it.)

But if in eternity past, if in the recent past, and if in the distant future all of God’s purposes for His people have only been good, then Paul concludes that His purposes at the present time, even in hardship, must also be only good for His people.

**Foreknew:** Not just that God knew that we would exist, or knew some fact about us, because it is *persons* whom God foreknew. It may be paraphrased, “those whom God thought of in a personal, saving relationship.” **Predestined:** Planned that they would ultimately be like Christ, **conformed to the image of His Son.** These two verses outline a sequence of events and indicate that everyone who has begun the sequence will complete it.

**8:31** Paul defiantly and triumphantly raises five unanswerable questions designed to give believers a profound assurance of spiritual security.

**8:34** It *is* **Christ** who will be the Judge over all the Earth, but He will not condemn us, and even now He **makes intercession** (brings requests to God the Father) **for us.**

**8:35** For any Christian who is discouraged this powerful passage gives assurance of Christ’s *present love*, active at *every moment* in the Christian’s life. Are any causes of discouragement greater than those Paul mentions? And if not, then we are never in this life separated from Christ’s love. Even in hardships we can be **more than conquerors** (v. 37).<sup>2</sup>

**ROMANS, LETTER TO THE** The longest and—since the Reformation—most theologically controversial of Paul’s letters. Romans often is regarded as Paul’s fullest expression of his theology, with key passages addressing many overlapping themes, including:

- sin and judgment (1:18–3:20; 7:7–25);
- righteousness (3:1–4:12; 5:17–21; 6:15–20; 9:30–10:13);
- salvation (3:21–26; 5:1–11; 6:1–7:6; 8:1–39);
- faith (3:21–4:25);
- the death and resurrection of Christ (3:21–26; 5:6–21; 6:1–11; 8:1–4);
- the law (3:27–4:25; 7:7–25);
- the Holy Spirit (8:1–27);
- the role and status of Israel (9:1–11:36); and
- obedience and self-sacrificial love (12:1–15:13).

Romans most likely was written during the mid- to late AD 50s and was sent from Corinth. Most scholars contend that the churches in Rome that received the letter were predominantly Gentile with a Jewish minority, although the ethnic composition is a key point of debate (see below: “Recipients”). Other scholarly topics include Paul’s reason for writing Romans (see below:

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<sup>2</sup> Hayford, J. W. (Ed.). (1997). *Spirit filled life study Bible* (electronic ed., Ro 8:1–35). Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson.

“Purpose”), the letter’s original form (see below: “Integrity of the Letter”), and its support for the doctrine of justification by faith (see below: “Ongoing Debate over Justification in Romans”).

### Outline of Romans

(For an expanded outline with passage summaries, see below: “The Content of Romans.”)

- 1:1–17—Letter opening
- 1:18–3:20—God’s impartial wrath against sin
  - 1:18–32—The wickedness of humanity
  - 2:1–16—Impartial judgment
  - 2:17–3:8—Jewish identity and circumcision as a potential exception to God’s impartiality
  - 3:9–20—All humanity is sinful
- 3:21–5:11—God’s saving righteousness
  - 3:21–26—The demonstration of God’s saving righteousness in the death of Jesus
  - 3:27–31—The law from the viewpoint of faith excludes boasting
  - 4:1–25—Abraham as the father of all who believe
  - 5:1–11—The basis for the hope of salvation
- 5:12–8:39—The struggle between sin and grace, the weakness of the law, and the power of the spirit
  - 5:12–21—Humanity in Adam and in Christ
  - 6:1–7:6—The “already” of sanctification
  - 7:7–25—Is the law sin?
  - 8:1–39—The agent and certainty of new life
- 9:1–11:36—God’s faithfulness to Israel
  - 9:1–5—The problem of Paul’s own people
  - 9:6–29—God’s right to choose
  - 9:30–10:21—Israel’s rejection
  - 11:1–36—The current remnant and all Israel
- 12:1–15:13—A living sacrifice in response to the mercies of God
  - 12:1–21—Conduct within the body of Christ toward others
  - 13:1–14—Conduct toward the governing authorities
  - 14:1–15:13—The relationship between the weak and the strong
- 15:14–16:27—Conclusion and final greetings

### Author, Place, and Date

Paul identifies himself as the author of the letter in 1:1. Scholars are confident of the letter’s authenticity. Paul, as was his custom, used an amanuensis (a scribe or secretary; in this case, Tertius) for assistance in writing (16:22; Richards, *Paul*; Klauck, *Ancient Letters*, 54–58).

Paul likely wrote Romans from Corinth in Greece. He sends greetings from Gaius, who is serving as the apostle’s host (16:23) and is a member of the Corinthian church (1 Cor 1:14). Paul also sends greetings from Erastus, a city treasurer (Rom 16:23; see also 2 Tim 4:20). A mid-first-century inscription identifies an Erastus as the city manager of Corinth. The Erastus of Corinth and of 16:23 are most likely the same individual (Jewett, *Romans*, 981–83). Paul also commends Phoebe, who hailed from Cenchreae, one of the ports of Corinth (16:1).

Paul wrote Romans in the mid- to late 50s. Paul’s admonition that the Romans pay their taxes (13:6–7) may reflect the unrest and formal protest over taxes in Rome under Nero that took place

prior to AD 58 (Tacitus, *Annals*, 13.50–52). In that case, the letter would be dated after AD 55 and the beginning of that unrest.

Paul notes his plans to travel to Jerusalem, then to Rome, and finally to Spain (Rom 15:25). This itinerary, along with the Corinthian origin of the letter, may be linked to Luke's narrative in the book of Acts. In Acts 20:2–3 Paul spent three months in Greece (as promised in 1 Cor 16:6; see also 2 Cor 13:1, 10) before traveling to Jerusalem. Paul announces that he has finished his missionary labors from Jerusalem to Illyricum (north of Greece in the Balkans; Rom 15:19–23)—the geographical targets of the missionary journeys narrated in Acts. Therefore, Romans may be dated in conjunction with chronologies based on Acts. Acts 18:12–17 narrates Paul's trial before the Roman proconsul Gallio in Corinth; the trial can be dated by means of the renowned Gallio inscription to the summer of AD 51 (Das, *Galatians*, 43–45). Paul returned to Antioch from Corinth before setting out again on another round of missionary labors, including a two-year stint in Ephesus (Acts 19:10) before arriving in Corinth (Acts 20:2–3). The intervening travel and the two years in Ephesus between Paul's departure from Corinth and subsequent return indicate that his letter to the Romans would be, at the very earliest, in AD 54. Most scholars therefore date the letter between AD 55 and 58.

### Recipients

The churches at Rome were the original audience of this letter. Some manuscripts omit the Roman addressees in 1:7 (see also 1:15) in an apparently deliberate attempt to universalize the letter's value for Christians elsewhere (Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 446).

Although the Roman congregations have been in existence “for many years” by the time of the letter (15:22–23), Paul has not yet visited them (1:10, 13; 15:14, 22–23; 16:5). As he writes during the mid- to late 50s, he does not betray any awareness that Peter had been to Rome. The book of Acts does not record any missionary work by Peter as far as Rome during the early years of the Christian movement, despite the author's interest in Peter's ministry. Later authors such as Irenaeus in AD 180 celebrated Peter and Paul's laying the foundations of the Roman church in their preaching (*Adversus Haereses* 3.1.1, 3.3.2; see also *1 Clem.* 5–6), but this may refer to their final ministry and martyrdom in Rome.

### *Jewish Origins of the Roman Church*

Paul does not say how the churches in Rome originated. Merchants and immigrants may have brought the message of Christ to the hub of the empire as early as AD 30. Roman Jews converted by Peter's Pentecost sermon (Acts 2:5, 10) also may have taken the gospel message back to Rome. Ambrosiaster writes that the Roman churches were not founded by an apostle but began in Jewish communities (CSEL 81.1.5–6).

The Jewish population in first-century Rome has been estimated between 15,000 and 60,000. Pompey brought Jewish captives to Rome in 62 BC after annexing the Judaeian province. Ancient historians report that 4,000 draftable-age Jewish men were expelled in AD 19 by Emperor Tiberius (Josephus, *Antiquities* 18.3.5 §§83–84; Tacitus, *Annals* 2.85; Suetonius, *Tib.* 36; Dio Cassius, *Hist.* 57.18.5). Rome was home to 13 Jewish synagogues (Das, *Solving*, 163–64), which likely were the starting points for the Christian community in Rome.

Paul quotes the Jewish Scriptures throughout Romans. The intended audience's appreciation for these Scriptures betrays exposure to the Jewish synagogues. Gentile authors of the day do not display any awareness of the content of the Jewish Scriptures beyond Genesis 1 (Longinus, [*Subl.*] 9.9; Ocellus Lucanus). Many interpreters think that Gentiles were initially a minority within the mostly Jewish Christ-believing movement in the synagogues.

### *Separation from Jewish Community*

At the time of Paul's letter, the Roman Christians were no longer meeting as a subgroup within the Roman synagogues (Das, *Solving*, 115–48; Gagnon, "Why the 'Weak' at Rome"; contra Nanos, *Mystery*). Paul addresses the Roman Christians as separate and distinct assemblies (note the assembly that meets in the home of Prisca and Aquila in 16:5). Paul calls the addressees his brothers and sisters (*adelphoi*) at the beginning of the letter (1:3). These "brothers and sisters" have died to the Jewish law through the body of Christ (7:4, 6), received Christ's Spirit (8:9, 12), are "heirs with Christ" (8:17), and are one body of Christ (12:1–8)—in effect, they are in Christ. Paul therefore distinguishes the "brothers and sisters" from "Israel" in Rom 10:1. In the one instance where Paul applies the term "brothers and sisters" to his own ethnic people in 9:3, he is very careful to signal the departure from his normal usage for Christ-believers with the qualifications "my brothers and sisters" and "according to the flesh."

Paul admonishes the "weak" in Rom 14:3 not to judge the strong and admonishes them again in 14:19 and 15:5. Such authoritative exhortation could not have been directed toward non—Christ-believing synagogue Jews. Paul's apostolic authority would carry no weight in the synagogues. Such exhortations indicate that the "weak" numbered among the Christ-believing members of Paul's audience. In fact, the "weak" observe the day in honor of the Lord (14:6), whom Paul repeatedly identifies as Jesus Christ (Rom 14:9, 14; 15:6). Nothing in Paul's exhortation of the "weak" identifies them as non—Christ-believers who are meeting within a synagogue context—a context Paul fails to identify either here or elsewhere in the letter. The Christ-believers thus appear to have already made a break from the synagogues in their worship of the Lord. This conclusion agrees with the available external evidence, especially in the wake of Claudius' edict to expel Jews from the city.

### *Expulsion of Jews from Rome*

Suetonius records Claudius' expulsion of the Jews from Rome at the "instigation of *Chrestus*" (Claudius 25; trans. Rolfe). There is no extant instance of a Jewish male with this name in the first-century Mediterranean world; *Chrestus* appears to be a misunderstanding of the Greek *Christos* ("Christ"), which was pronounced the same way (Das, *Solving*, 150–58). The ancient author Orosius dates the expulsion to AD 49, which is consistent with Claudius's actions at that point in his reign (Das, *Solving*, 158–61, 170). Luke reports that Prisca (or Priscilla) and Aquila ended up in Corinth (Acts 18:2) after they, along with other Jews, were expelled from Rome. Some scholars have raised doubts about a mass expulsion of Rome's entire Jewish community (15,000–60,000 Jews) and its supposed implications (Das, *Solving*, 162–66). In this view, Suetonius' report likely is referring to a limited action against the ringleaders in the conflict—Jewish Christians.

### *Ethnic Composition*

Many scholars think that Romans was written to a mixed audience of Jewish and Gentile Christians. Others, a minority, contend that Paul was writing to an almost exclusively Gentile audience (Stowers, *Rereading*; Das, *Solving*, 53–114; Thorsteinsson, *Paul's Interlocutor*).

If the letter was composed after Claudius's edict expired (when Nero became emperor in AD 54), as many scholars believe, then the exiled Jewish Christians would have returned to Rome and, finding themselves no longer welcome in the synagogues, joined Gentile Christ-believers in mixed assemblies. During the expulsion period, the Roman congregations may have added Gentile converts, meaning that the returning Jewish Christians—formerly a majority in the churches—now found themselves in the minority (see Rom 14:1–15:6; 16:3). Under this

scenario, Paul wrote the letter to both Jewish and Gentile Christ-believers to assist them in their relationships with each other and to remind them of their indebtedness to the spiritual heritage of the Jewish people.

If *Romans* was written earlier, *during* the period of Jewish expulsion, then the churches to which Paul is writing were composed entirely or almost entirely of Gentiles. Paul repeatedly identifies the audience as Gentiles (see 1:5, 13; 6:19; 11:13; 15:15–16; Das, “Praise the Lord,” 90–110; “Gentile Encoded Audience”). Paul urges the audience to greet Prisca and Aquila, who were Jewish co-laborers in his missionary work among the Gentiles (16:3; compare Acts 18:2). Prisca, Aquila, Andronicus, Junia, and Herodion are called Paul’s “kinsmen” (Rom 16:7, 11), a word that may be translated instead as “relatives” (note the familial language in Rom 16). Andronicus and Junia, Paul’s “fellow captives,” are a missionary couple and thus were likely involved in his missionary labors among the Gentiles—further evidence that the Roman audience is Gentile.

Paul’s references to his readers as those who are no longer under the law (6:14–15; 7:4) and who know the law (7:1) may refer to Jews or to Gentiles who had prior exposure to Moses’ law in the synagogues. Some Gentiles would have been sympathetic to the customs of the Jewish law, and others less so. The reference to Abraham as “our” forefather “according to the flesh” (4:1) may be construed very differently (Hays, “Have We Found Abraham,” Stowers, *Rereading*, 241–42; Moo, *Romans*, 259–60; Schreiner, *Romans*, 213–14).

Paul appears to be addressing conflicts in the Roman community over Jewish dietary and calendrical observances (14:1–15:7; Donfried, “False Presuppositions,” 107–11). These customs were fairly popular among some of the Gentiles in Rome (Das, *Solving*, 106–13) and are of no help in identifying the ethnic identity of the audience.

### **Purpose**

Paul does not explicitly identify a purpose for *Romans*. The various proposals may be grouped into five categories:

1. Instructional: Paul is writing to convey theological truths.
2. Apologetic: The letter is a response to Paul’s potential opponents.
3. Missionary: Paul’s primary aim is to support the churches in Rome—perhaps so that they, in turn, could support his intended mission to Spain.
4. Pastoral: Paul is addressing conflict between Jewish and Gentile believers about the Jewish law.
5. Complex: The letter is shaped by multiple objectives.

### *Instructional Purpose*

Already at the time of the 16th-century Reformation, Melancthon considered *Romans* to be a compendium of Christian doctrine (Stuhlmacher, *Paul’s Letter*, 2). Ancient manuscripts that omit the identification of the Roman addressees (Rom 1:7, 15) and the last two chapters of the letter bolster this perspective. From early on, the letter was understood as intended for a broader audience, perhaps as a comprehensive statement of Paul’s gospel and doctrine. However, *Romans* does not offer a comprehensive overview of Paul’s thought. The letter is missing any discussion about, among other topics, Paul’s understanding of the Church (12:3–8 is rather meager), the Lord’s Supper (1 Cor 11:17–34), the resurrection (1 Cor 15; 1 Thess 4:13–5:11), or Christology (Phil 2:6–11).

The view that Romans is intended as timeless theology appears to overlook the evidence for a specific situation and audience, especially at the beginning and end of the letter. Paul's remarks indicate his awareness of the situation at Rome, as he praises the Romans' renowned faith (Rom 1:8), knowledge (15:14), and obedience (16:19). He refers to teaching they have received (6:17; 16:17), and he is confident that his instructions will serve as a "reminder" (15:14–15). His comments about taxes may reflect the Roman milieu (13:6–7), and he assumes that his audience has prior knowledge of the Jerusalem collection (15:26). Nygren advocates reading Romans as a theological treatise, but his commentary does not give attention to some portions of the letter that appear to be directed to the needs of a particular audience that is facing specific circumstances.

Bornkamm theorizes that the letter represents Paul's reflections on his gospel message in view of his impending trip to Jerusalem (Bornkamm, "Letter to the Romans"). On the contrary, Paul does not identify specific Jerusalem groups and their positions, and it is not clear why a summary that has Jerusalem in view should be directed to Rome, to churches that Paul had neither founded nor visited. If this is Paul's self-introduction to the Romans, then the letter is not in the form an introduction would take. Bornkamm has to minimize those aspects of the letter that appear to be directed to a specific situation in Rome.

#### *Apologetic Purpose*

Jervell ("Letter") concludes that Paul was anticipating the concerns he would encounter at Jerusalem (Rom 6:1; 7:7; 15:25–26, 31). Other scholars, such as Stuhlmacher ("Purpose"; *Paul's Letter*) and Campbell ("Determining the Gospel") propose that Romans confronts opponents of Paul's ministry who were present or soon to be present in Rome (3:8; 16:17–20). Both proposals take Paul as responding to potential opponents, whether in Jerusalem or in Rome.

Jervell's view—that Paul is outlining what he intended to say when he arrived at Jerusalem with the collection—does not explain why Paul would send this letter to the churches in Rome. Paul does not identify any particular conflict with the Jerusalem Christians and never raises the potential issue of Gentile circumcision (note the Jerusalem agreement in Gal 2:1–10). An emphasis on the upcoming Jerusalem visit must also ignore the letter's evidence for a specific situation at Rome (for further problems with this overemphasis on the Jerusalem visit, see Das, *Solving*, 29–32).

As for opponents in Rome (the view of Stuhlmacher and Campbell), Rom 3:8 (note the related question in 6:1) and 16:17–20 do not offer particularly concrete evidence. Commentators regularly note the vagueness of 3:8; this vagueness speaks against an identification with individuals in the Roman congregations (Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 137). For that matter, Paul never identifies individuals nor connects his teachings or exhortations to particular individuals. He likely is reflecting on objections that emerged elsewhere in his ministry as a means of furthering the argument of his letter.

#### *Missionary Purpose*

Paul may have written the letter in order to garner support for his intended missionary labors in Spain (Zeller, *Juden und Heiden*; Reichert, *Römerbrief*; Jewett, *Romans*, esp. 80, 87–91, 926). According to this view, Paul wanted to present his gospel message to the churches in Rome, which he had yet to visit, so that they would provide a firm launching point and support for his Spanish mission (15:24, 28). Jewett goes further, suggesting that Paul is trying to unify the churches at Rome, lest that secure base for his work in Spain be compromised. Alternatively, Paul's references to his upcoming Spanish mission could be intended to show the wide scope of

his ministry—from Jerusalem in the east to Spain in the west—and support his apostolic authority over Roman churches he has yet to visit (Das, *Solving*, 32–34; “Paul of Tarshish”).

Klein contends that Paul wanted to provide an apostolic foundation to the churches in Rome (1:13–15, 15:20; Klein, “Paul’s Purpose”; compare Das, *Solving*, 34–37.). He would be doing work in an area not reached by another apostle (15:20).

### *Pastoral Purpose*

Donfried and others have contended that Paul wrote the letter to resolve a conflict between Jewish and Gentile members of the Roman churches over their relationship to Moses’ law (Donfried, “Short Note,” 46–52; Das, *Solving*). Romans 1–11 lays a foundation in the gospel for a proper understanding of the Jewish law. Paul then applies that understanding in 14:1–15:13, where he admonishes the strong and the weak with respect to Jewish customs. These chapters may be mending the relationship between Jewish and Gentile Christ-believers, or they may be arbitrating between differing views among the Gentiles about their relationship to the Jewish law. The adherents of these approaches do not deny an intended mission to Spain or an upcoming visit to Jerusalem, but recognize that these places are mentioned only briefly and do not figure throughout the remainder of the letter.

### *Complex Purpose*

Some have contended that none of these purposes can fully explain all of the issues raised by the letter. Paul’s purpose in writing the letter is multifaceted (thus Wedderburn, *Reasons for Romans*; Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, liv—lviii. For a detailed discussion of the various views, see Das, *Solving*, 26–52; Jewett, *Romans*, 80–91.)

## **Integrity of the Letter**

The manuscript tradition for the letter to the Romans presents several difficulties. First, some manuscripts omit 1:7 and 15—verses that identify the Roman addressees. Second, some manuscripts omit Romans 16, and others omit both Romans 15 and 16. Third, the doxology (16:25–27) is positioned at the end of chapter 14 in some manuscripts, at the end of chapter 15 in others, and in its current location in still others (Kümmel, *Introduction*, 315; Gamble, *Textual History*, 23–24). The omission of 1:7, 1:15, and chapter 15 and/or chapter 16 would eliminate key references to the audience and occasion of the letter.

The Various Locations of the Doxology (Rom 16:25–27) in Manuscripts:

1:1–14:23	15:1–16:23	<b>Doxology</b>		p <sup>61</sup> , $\aleph$ ( <sup>o</sup> ), B, C, bo, sa, D, e, f, vg, sy <sup>p</sup>
1:1–14:23	<b>Doxology</b>	15:1–16:23	<b>Doxology</b>	A, P, min
1:1–14:23	<b>Doxology</b>	15:1–16:24		sy <sup>h</sup>
1:1–14:23	15:1–16:24			F, G (Archetype of D), g
1:1–14:23	<b>Doxology</b>			vg <sup>2089</sup> , Old Latin according to

1:1–15:33

**Doxology**

16:1–23

p<sup>46</sup>*A 14-Chapter Version of Romans*

A number of manuscripts place the doxology (16:25–27) after 14:23, thus supporting a 14-chapter version of the letter. In some manuscripts, the doxology follows *both* 14:23 and 16:24. An early Vulgate manuscript (Codex Amiatinus) contains short summaries of each section of the letter, with the 50th summary (14:13–23) followed by the 51st and final summary (16:25–27); other Vulgate manuscripts follow the same pattern of paragraph divisions (Gamble, *Textual History*, 16–18). The Marcionite prologue, which claims that Romans was written from Athens, seems to reflect a form of the letter without Rom 15–16—that is, without the chapters that point to a Corinthian origin. The church fathers Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Cyprian do not quote Rom 15–16, and Tertullian considered Rom 14 the conclusion of the letter. Lake concludes that Paul wrote a 14-chapter version of Romans and then added 1:7, 1:15, and chapter 15 when he sent the letter to Rome (Lake, *Earlier Epistles*, 335–50, 361–65, and especially 365–69). In this view, a letter to Ephesus (Rom 16) was later appended.

This 14-chapter version of Romans is likely not the letter's original form. Romans 15:1–16:16, if not also 16:17–24, are Pauline in style and content. Paul's discussion of the weak and the strong, which he commences in 14:1, does not naturally conclude until 15:6 or 15:13. Some scholars, following a comment in Origen, trace the 14-chapter form of the letter to Marcion, but this hypothesis remains uncorroborated and problematic (Das, *Solving*, 15). Romans may have been deliberately shortened into a 14-chapter form for the sake of a wider audience: The Western bilingual manuscripts without Rom 15–16 also omit "in Rome" in 1:7 and "to those in Rome" in 1:15—thus removing any trace of the Roman addressees (Gamble, *Textual History*, 29–33, 114–24; Lightfoot, *Biblical Essays*, 311–20, 352–74). Nevertheless, it is not clear why the shortened version of the letter ends at 14:23 and not at 15:6 or 15:13.

*A 15-Chapter Version of the Letter*

Manson advances Schulz's 1829 proposal that Paul wrote Rom 1–15 to the church at Rome and then added chapter 16, with its extensive list of greetings, for the church at Ephesus (Manson, "Letter to the Romans," 10–12; Kümmel, *Introduction*, 318n45). P<sup>46</sup> places the doxology (16:25–27) after Rom 15. Manson considers it unrealistic that Paul would have 26 personal friends in the Roman churches, which he had never visited (1:10–15; 15:19–23); Ephesus would have been a different matter, in view of Paul's extensive ministry there. Several of the people listed in Rom 16 are associated with Asia, if not Ephesus itself (e.g., Prisca and Aquila, Acts 18:18; 1 Cor 16:19; 2 Tim 2:19; Epaenetus, "the first convert in Asia," Rom 16:5). Manson thinks that the warnings of Rom 16:17–20 parallel the warning against false teachers in Ephesus in Acts 20:29–32 (Manson, "St. Paul's Letter," 13n23; Gamble, *Textual History*, 39–40). Manson speculates that as Paul reflected on the conflicts he had endured at Corinth and Galatia over the new faith and its Jewish roots, he sent a summary of his thoughts to Rome (Rom 1–15). He then sent a copy of the letter to Ephesus with Rom 16 serving as a cover letter (also Schmithals, *Römerbrief: Ein Kommentar*, 546–49). Romans 16 also may have served as a letter of recommendation for Phoebe (McDonald, "Was Romans XVI," 369–72).

On the other hand, even P<sup>46</sup> includes Rom 16:1–23 immediately after the doxology, and this papyrus would not explain the origin of the other versions of Romans. (According to the principles of textual criticism, the earliest reading is the one that can explain the origin of all the variants.) The only manuscript including Rom 15 but not 16:1–23 is miniscule 1506, but even in 1506 a blank half-page separates Rom 15 and 16:25–27; the copyist apparently was aware of 16:1–23 (Lampe, “Roman Christians,” 217). Lampe demonstrates several parallels in vocabulary and style between Rom 1–15 and Rom 16 (Lampe, *Paul to Valentinus*, 160–64). The Greek *de* in 16:1 proves that chapter 16 was not its own letter since it presupposes preceding text (Ollrog, “Abfassungsverhältnisse,” 226–27; Lampe, “Roman Christians,” 217).

Paul very well could have known 26 people in Rome in view of travel to and from the capital (Lampe, “Roman Christians,” 219, citing *CIG* 3920). Such extensive greetings would have served as his credentials for congregations that he had yet to visit (Wedderburn, *Reasons for Romans*, 14), and his companions Prisca and Aquila were no strangers to Rome (Acts 18:2; 2 Tim 4:19; Ollrog, “Abfassungsverhältnisse,” 226). Ancient inscriptions corroborate people in the capital with such names as in Rom 16 (Gamble, *Textual History*, 51). Narcissus (16:10–11) was perhaps the powerful Roman freedman who exerted influence in Claudius’ circles, and Aristobulus of Rome may have been the grandson of Herod the Great and brother of Agrippa I (Gamble, *Textual History*, 50). Identifying Epaenetus as the first convert *in Asia* (16:5) makes little sense if addressed to Asian Ephesians who would already know Epaenetus (Morris, *Romans*, 27). Similarly, the Ephesians already would have known that Prisca, Aquila (16:3), and Timothy (16:21) were Paul’s coworkers. At the same time, the lack of specific details in the greetings of many of the others suggests less knowledge about these individuals on Paul’s part, which would be unlikely were he greeting familiar Ephesian associates (Ollrog, “Abfassungsverhältnisse,” 236–41; Jewett, “Paul, Phoebe,” 148). Paul did not send such an extensive list of greetings to any of the churches he had visited or founded, and he would have surely known in Ephesus more than the 26 individuals mentioned. For Rome, on the other hand, Paul would want to list all his contacts, since they would serve as his references (Weima, “Preaching the Gospel,” 362). Paul—strangely, if Romans 16 were directed to Ephesus—does not mention any plans to visit or his experiences there. The ecumenical greeting of “all the churches” (16:16) also would make sense if directed from the eastern churches toward Rome.

Hellenistic and Pauline epistolary conclusions typically include, in some form or another: hortatory remarks, a wish of peace, greetings, and a grace benediction. Romans 16 includes the standard elements of a letter closing: greetings (16:3–15), kiss of peace (16:16), admonition (16:17–20), and grace benediction (16:20; Gamble, *Textual History*, 84–95; Ollrog, “Abfassungsverhältnisse,” 226–27). Romans 15:33 would not likely be the conclusion of a letter since no other Pauline letter concludes with a wish of peace, and such wishes of peace precede Pauline greetings (as is the case with Rom 16, and also elsewhere in the New Testament: Phil 4:9; 2 Cor 13:11; 1 Thess 5:23; 2 Thess 3:16; Heb 13:20; 3 John 15; Gamble, *Textual History*, 54). The final grace benediction (Rom 16:20b, 24) is typical of a Pauline letter closing. Conversely, a letter consisting almost exclusively of greetings is simply unattested in antiquity (Gamble, *Textual History*, 85; Kümmel, *Introduction*, 319). Weima notes how 15:33–16:27 refers to several of the concerns of the letter (Weima, “Preaching the Gospel,” 359). Donfried describes a shift in scholarship, with Rom 16 now considered an integral part of the letter (Donfried, *The Romans Debate*, lxx; see also Das, *Solving*, 10–23; Gamble, *Textual History*, especially 84–95).

*Romans 16:24–27*

The majority of Pauline specialists consider 16:24–27 secondary, perhaps an addition to Marcion’s shortened version of Romans (Kümmel, *Introduction*, 316; Lietzmann, *Einführung*, 130–31; Collins, “Case,” 293–303; Jewett, *Romans*, 7–8). Later, when Marcion’s text was compared with the original reading, the added doxology remained after 14:23 was deleted or was moved after 15:33 or 16:23. Recently, several scholars have argued for the authenticity of the doxology, noting connections to 14:1–15:6 as well as to the rest of the Pauline corpus (Schreiner, *Romans*, 810–17; Marshall, “Romans 16:25–27,” 170–84; Hurtado, “Doxology,” 185–99; Weima, “Preaching the Gospel,” 364–65; Borse, “Schlußwort,” 173–78).

## The Content of Romans

### *Letter Opening (Rom 1:1–17)*

Paul greets the Romans and emphasizes the gospel message concerning the Son (1:1–7). In the thanksgiving section (1:8–17) Paul expresses his desire to visit the Romans; he wants to reap a harvest among the Romans as he has among the rest of the Gentiles. Grammatically subordinated and connected to 1:8–15 is Paul’s thematic rationale for his wide-ranging apostolic labors: a powerful gospel message for the salvation of everyone who has faith, to the Jew first and also the Greek—that is, Gentile (1:16–17). The gospel reveals the righteousness of God through faith.

### *God’s Impartial Wrath against Sin (Rom 1:18–3:20)*

God judges humanity impartially on the basis of deeds. Consequently, God’s wrath stands against human wickedness and sin.

**The Wickedness of Humanity (Rom 1:18–32).** Although Paul’s indictment of humanity in 1:18–32 includes sins of idolatry and sexual immorality that Jews consider characteristic of the Gentiles, the apostle casts the net more widely. God’s wrath is revealed from heaven against all the ungodliness and wickedness of human beings. Paul draws in 1:23 on language from the Jewish Scriptures that indicted Israel as well (Jer 2:11; Psa 106:20). In addition to singling out particularly heinous sins, Paul calls attention to rather common forms of sinful behavior (Rom 1:28–32).

**Impartial Judgment (Rom 2:1–16).** Paul issues a warning to the hypocritical judge, who ironically is indicted by the very same sins that he criticizes (2:1–5). Paul continues to speak universally of Jews and Greeks (2:9–10), as God judges and rewards each person on the basis of deeds (2:6–8). In Romans 2:12–16 Paul turns to a potential objection to God’s impartial judgment—the possession of God’s revealed law by only a portion of humanity. The law, however, provides no advantage since one must obey that law, and enough of God’s law has been written on the human heart to hold all people equally accountable.

**Jewish Identity and Circumcision as a Potential Exception to God’s Impartiality (Rom 2:17–3:8).** Paul explains that even the Jew is subject to God’s judgment. Jewish ethnic identity and circumcision are of value only if one, in fact, obeys the law. Otherwise, circumcision is regarded as uncircumcision and the obedient uncircumcised are regarded as circumcised. Even so, Paul affirms an advantage in being Jewish—especially because God has entrusted the Jews with His revelation (3:1–2). Even if the Jews are unfaithful, this does not nullify God’s own justice and faithfulness.

**All Humanity is Sinful (Rom 3:9–20).** Paul cites several Old Testament passages against Israel’s enemies to indict ironically the Jews themselves and thus all humanity in sin (3:9).

*God's Saving Righteousness (Rom 3:21–5:11)*

**The Demonstration of God's Saving Righteousness in the Death of Jesus (Rom 3:21–26).**

Since all have sinned, God's righteousness is now disclosed through faith in Jesus Christ. God put forward the blood of Christ as an atoning sacrifice for all who believe. It is through the work of Christ that God can be just in punishing sin, yet at the same time can declare sinners righteous before Him by faith in Christ, apart from the law. Some scholars would place greater emphasis in this section on the faith or faithfulness *of* Christ (i.e., in his obedient death on the cross).

**The Law from the Viewpoint of Faith Excludes Boasting (Rom 3:27–31).** The righteousness of God is attested by the law and the prophets (3:21–22). The law may be understood from the viewpoint of the works that it demands or from the viewpoint of the faith to which it bears witness (3:27–28). If it were a matter of the law's works, then God would be a God only of the Jews (3:29). Precisely because God is the God of all people, the law—understood from the point of view of faith—excludes human boasting, including the Jews' (3:27, 30–31). Paul then presents Abraham as the premier example of the law's witness to faith.

**Abraham as the Father of All Who Believe (Rom 4:1–25).** Abraham is an example of someone who is justified by faith apart from works. God “justifies the ungodly” (4:5 ESV), which implies that Abraham too was “ungodly” when he received the promises and believed. In Romans 4:7–8, Paul quotes Psa 32:1–2, about the sinner whose sins are covered and forgiven, not reckoned or counted; in Rom 4:9–10, Paul applies the language of the psalm to Abraham. Scripture is clear that righteousness is through faith alone, even for Abraham and David (Rom 4:3; quoting Gen 15:6).

Since Abraham was justified by faith *before* his circumcision, he is the father of *all* who believe—Jews and Gentiles (4:9–12). The promises to Abraham and his heirs were always based on faith apart from the law or its works (4:13–22)—faith that is in the God who would raise the Lord Jesus from the dead for Christ-followers' justification (4:23–25).

**The Basis for the Hope of Salvation (Rom 5:1–11).** This paragraph may be included with 3:21–4:25, or it may be considered the beginning of a new section that continues through Rom 8. The paragraph summarizes key motifs from the prior chapters but also introduces concepts that will figure into the following chapters. The believer, thanks to justification by faith, enjoys access to God's grace and confident hope of sharing God's glory, even in the midst of suffering. Since Christ died for the ungodly, the believer enjoys reconciliation with God and salvation from wrath.

*The Struggle between Sin and Grace, the Weakness of the Law, and the Power of the Spirit (Rom 5:12–8:39)*

Paul shifts from primarily juridical language to apocalyptic imagery. Humanity, indeed all creation, is suffering under powerful forces and must be rescued by an even more powerful force in Christ. At the same time, the invading new reality of Christ and his Spirit has confronted the present reality of sin and death. Those who have been baptized into Christ and who share in Him enjoy the Spirit and are *already* free from sin. At the same time, they are still engaged in the ongoing struggle against sin. Paul addresses the Romans as a new people in Christ but also as a people who must actively battle against sin (6:1–7:6). The law proves to be no ally in that struggle, since sin grabs hold of the law for its own ends (7:7–25). Ultimately, the powerful, enabling Spirit serves as the believer's foretaste of future, eternal glory (8:1–39).

**Humanity in Adam and in Christ (Rom 5:12–21).** Even as Adam’s sin brought death into the world, Christ’s act of righteousness brought life and a new beginning for humanity. In Christ, sin and death no longer dominate in the world; God’s grace in Christ is a more powerful force. The condemnation of those in Adam under sin gives way to righteousness and life for those in Christ. Sin and grace are virtually personified as ruling powers, but the law of Moses proves to be yet another ruling power and a complicating factor in the simple sin-grace opposition (5:20–21). Paul subsequently must resolve the relationships between these cosmic, ruling powers.

**The “Already” of Sanctification (Rom 6:1–7:6).** Paul explores the relationships among sin, the law, and grace (5:20–21)—first between sin and grace (6:1–14), and then between the law and grace (6:15–7:6). With respect to the first relationship, Paul addresses the objection that grace encourages further sin (returning to a matter raised in 3:8). Should the believer who enjoys grace continue in sin in order to enjoy *more* grace? Paul responds that those who have been baptized have been united with Christ, have shared in his death, and have a new identity. They will rise again from the dead as he did and thus will live differently. The baptized believer who has died with Christ enjoys genuine freedom from an enslaving sin. In Paul’s characteristic approach to the Christian life, imperative statements (commands) tend to be based on indicative statements (facts). Here, the fact of believers’ identity “in Christ” grounds Paul’s exhortations to struggle against sin. With respect to the law of Moses, Paul’s argument takes the form of an analogy based on marriage laws: Just as a woman is free to remarry only after the death of her spouse, Christ’s death has freed believers from an enslaving relationship under the law (7:1–6).

**Is the Law Sin? (Rom 7:7–25).** Paul’s explanation that only death can free the individual from being enslaved under the law (7:1–6) is reminiscent of how Christ’s death offers the only release from sin in the prior chapter. This connection naturally leads to the question of 7:7: Is the law sin? Paul emphatically denies this conclusion, using first-person statements that have led to multiple interpretations of the passage. The person referred to as “I,” who was once alive, died because of sin—which has hijacked the law in order to replicate itself. Thanks to sin, the law’s commandment, which promised life, brought death instead (7:10). Some scholars contend that verses 14–24 describe the “not yet” aspect of Christian existence in relation to the law of Moses (for instance, Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 377, 411–12). Most interpreters, however, consider 7:14–24 to be describing *non-Christian* existence under the law. A further question is whether this passage describes Paul’s own pre-Christian experience, Jewish experience more generally, or even Gentile experience (as those living “*apart from*” the law—Rom 7:9).

Romans 7:7 thus acts as a topic sentence for what follows, as Paul probes the specific (and more limited) question of whether the law is sin. The description of the “I” as sold into slavery “under” sin (7:14) does not accord with the freedom enjoyed by the baptized of Rom 6 who “died” to sin. Likewise, Romans 7:14’s description of a “fleshly” individual without reference to the Spirit (only the law is spiritual in 7:14–24, not the “I”) does not accord with 8:9’s description of those with the Spirit who are *not* in the flesh. Romans 7:25a introduces Jesus Christ as the one who rescues the “I” from a helpless situation in which the “I” simply does not do the “good” that it desires to do. In conformity to the chain-link logic advocated by the ancient rhetoricians, Paul returns to the helpless situation of the “I” in 7:25b before expanding in chapter 8 on the rescued Christian who now enjoys the Spirit.

**The Agent and Certainty of New Life (Rom 8:1–39).** What was impossible for the law under the power of sin and death, God has accomplished in Christ and the Spirit. Whereas sin grabs hold of the law to work death (7:7–13), the Spirit grabs hold of the law to work a very different

result (8:2). Thanks to the Spirit, those in Christ are no longer slaves in the flesh (8:9–10) but rather share in the blessings of God’s sons with the rights of inheritance (8:11–17).

Unfortunately, the present life remains in weakness and suffering, as believers—and, in fact, all creation—await the redemption and resurrection of their bodies (8:18–23). The Spirit remains active in the midst of human weakness, assisting and assuring the individual of victory (8:24–27). Neither death nor any other power can separate believers from God’s love in Christ, which God planned in advance for his own (8:28–39).

*God’s Faithfulness to Israel (Rom 9:1–11:36)*

**The Problem of Paul’s Own People (Rom 9:1–5).** Paul closes Romans 8:28–39 praising God for his blessings to an elect people, who cannot be separated from God’s love. That raises the question of another elect people who do not seem to be benefiting from their election: the Jews. Paul wishes himself cut off and accursed for the sake of his own people, even as Christ was cut off and accursed for the sake of humanity. Israel received the adoption as sons, the divine glory, the law, the temple worship, the promises—and from the Jews came Christ, who is God over all. The current plight of the original recipients of God’s promises is an obvious objection against the confidence Paul claims for believers in Christ at the end of the prior chapter. Ultimately, the apostle will make clear that God has not rejected the people he foreknew (11:2).

**God’s Right to Choose (Rom 9:6–29).** In the first of three attempts to answer the problem posed by ethnic Israel, Paul affirms God’s right to choose a people. Paul rejects the notion that all ethnic Israel is Israel (9:6). God has always worked with a portion of the whole—not all the descendants of Abraham or of Isaac or of Jacob (9:7–13). God’s choice is irrespective of what people have done or their ethnic identity (9:6, 11, 16, 18). God reserves the right to show mercy, to harden, and to fashion the clay as he will (9:14–23; compare Exod 33:19), whether Jews or Gentiles (9:17–18, 27–29). Ultimately, election and salvation depend upon God’s unmerited mercy.

**Israel’s Rejection (Rom 9:30–10:21).** God’s right to choose does not exonerate Israel from responsibility. Ironically, Israel emphasized the works of the law and missed the righteousness of faith, stumbling over the stone laid in Zion (9:30–33). After restating his heartfelt desire that his own people be saved, Paul explains that they did not submit to God’s righteousness with Christ as the end/goal of the law (10:1–4). Paul again contrasts the righteousness that comes from doing what the law requires and the righteousness by faith (10:5–8). All those who confess that Jesus is Lord, whether Jew or Gentile, will be saved (10:9–13). Since faith comes by hearing the message, the good news is being preached to the entire world—but, sadly, Israel has largely rejected that message (10:14–21).

**The Current Remnant and All Israel (Rom 11:1–36).** In Romans 11, Paul returns for a third time to the question of his own people and asks whether God has rejected them (11:1–2). The answer is an emphatic “no.” With logic paralleling 9:1–23, Paul distinguishes God’s elect from the rest of the Israelites. That election depends upon God’s unmerited grace (11:3–10), but some remained hardened.

Paul recognizes that the problem of ethnic Israel’s hardening and rejection remains. He asks if Israel has stumbled so as to fall (11:11), and he offers a glimmer of hope for the future: Although their stumbling and defeat has allowed salvation and riches to come to the Gentiles, “how much more will their full inclusion mean?” (11:11–12). In his ministry to the Gentiles,

Paul is intent on making his own people jealous and saving some of them (11:13–14). If their disobedience brought reconciliation to the world, he imagines their future acceptance will bring life from the dead (11:15). He turns to the image of an olive tree: Some of the branches were broken off because of unbelief so that a wild olive shoot, the Gentiles, might be grafted in. “You” Gentiles must not boast, however, because God can just as easily cut off the wild olive shoot to graft back in the natural branches (11:17–24). Paul envisions a present, temporary hardening of a “part” of Israel “until the full number of Gentiles has come in,” which will trigger “all Israel” being saved (11:25–26). God will banish ungodliness from Jacob and take away His people’s sins (11:26–27), thus resolving the plight with which Paul began in 9:1–5. Those who were once disobedient—a disobedience which resulted in mercy for “your” sake (as Gentiles)—will themselves receive mercy (11:28–32). The prospect that God will be merciful to all causes Paul to break forth in doxological praise of God’s unsearchable and inscrutable ways (11:33–36).

*A Living Sacrifice in Response to the Mercies of God (Rom 12:1–15:13)*

Paul frequently concludes his letters with exhortations. Here, they are firmly anchored in the saving mercies of God that Paul has described in 1:1–11:32, concluding with outright praise in 11:33–36. In Romans 12:1–15:13 Paul describes the behavior that befits those who enjoy salvation in Christ.

**Conduct within the Body of Christ toward Others (Rom 12:1–21).** Paul begins by encouraging the Romans to present their bodies as a living sacrifice to God, their spiritual worship (12:1–2). Paul then turns to a different “body”—the “body of Christ” to which the Romans belong. Each member of the body enjoys gifts to be used for the benefit of the others (12:3–8). Such other-centered love is to be expressed even toward those hostile to the Christ-believer (12:9–21).

**Conduct toward the Governing Authorities (Rom 13:1–14).** Paul addresses proper behavior toward the governing authorities as instituted by God (13:1–7). Christians are to pay their taxes and to give honor to the authorities, even as they are to love one another, which is the essence of the Ten Commandments and the law (13:7–10). Since the end is near, the Romans should live accordingly, leaving behind the works of darkness and the flesh (13:11–14).

**The Relationship between the Weak and the Strong (Rom 14:1–15:13).** The Roman community was experiencing tension between the “weak” and the “strong.” The “weak” observed the distinction between clean (kosher) and unclean food as well as a presumably Jewish calendar (14:2–3, 5, 6, 20–21). This does not necessarily mean that the “weak” of the letter must refer to Jews, however, as these customs were popular among non-Christ-believing Roman Gentiles. Many former godfearers within the Roman synagogues would have continued their Jewish practices in the churches. The “strong,” on the other hand, neither observed such customs nor saw any need for them, and this difference in practice and opinion apparently led to conflict.

Love, which fulfills the law (13:7–10), should express itself in the relationship between the weak and the strong. The weak are not to judge the strong for their exercise of freedom, and the strong are not to judge the weak for their convictions. When they come together, the strong ought to forego their liberty for the sake of the weak so that they do not cause the weak to stumble by enticing them to eat certain foods. The strong could harm the faith of the weak, rather than build them up (15:2). Christ’s own self-sacrifice should be the model for the behavior they are to express toward each other (15:3). As Christ welcomed them, they should welcome each other

(15:7). Paul closes with a catena of biblical quotations that stresses the full inclusion of the Gentiles among God's people (15:9–12), which he then applies to the Romans (15:13).

#### *Conclusion and Final Greetings (Rom 15:14–16:27)*

After stressing the full inclusion of the Gentiles among God's people (15:7–13), Paul explains that he can boldly write to the Romans since he is a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles; thus, they are the recipients of his apostolic ministry (15:14–16). Paul even *boasts* in Christ Jesus of his ministry to win the obedience of the Gentiles (15:17–18). Because of that ministry, Paul has proclaimed the gospel all the way from Jerusalem to Illyricum (northwest of Macedonia, along the northeastern shore of the Adriatic). He plans, after taking the collection to Jerusalem, to continue his ministry westward to Spain (15:22–29). He solicits the Romans' prayers that the dangerous trip to Jerusalem may succeed and that he may eventually enjoy their company (15:30–33). The final chapter of the letter requests that the Romans greet several individuals, many of whom have been assisting Paul in his missionary labors, especially Phoebe (16:1–16). Perhaps many of these individuals had gone to Rome to prepare for Paul's travels to Spain. The letter concludes with a warning against those who teach contrary to the doctrine the Romans have learned (16:17–20), along with final greetings (16:21–23) and a closing doxology (16:25–27).

#### **Ongoing Debate over Justification in Romans**

The rich content of Romans has been at the center of theological controversy since the time of Luther's Reformation. Ongoing scholarly controversies over Romans often involve the doctrine of justification by faith.

Following Luther, who popularized the view that Jews in Paul's day were trying to earn their way into heaven by doing good works, scholars generally have understood Paul as the champion of God's grace against the works-righteousness of his Jewish peers. In this view, Paul's doctrine of justification by faith is defined in opposition to legalism. However, Sanders is widely regarded as having demonstrated this legalistic reading to be a caricature of Judaism (Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*). Even critics of Sanders' overall conclusion have conceded that Second Temple Jews generally understood themselves to be the elect people of God based on His grace (see the various essays edited by Carson, et al., *Complexities*).

The revised understanding of Second Temple Judaism—that is, the nonlegalistic view associated with the so-called “New Perspective on Paul”—seems to be reflected in Romans. For instance, Romans 2:17–29 undermines confidence in the legalistic reading, since Paul does not fault the Jew in this passage attempting to earn salvation through works-righteousness. Instead, the Jew apparently assumes that righteousness is based on ethnic identity among God's elect people and on mere possession of the law. Based on this and other Pauline passages, advocates of the New Perspective have concluded that “works of the law” is Paul's shorthand for emphasizing aspects of the law that demarcate the Jewish people (Dunn, *New Perspective*). As a result, the doctrine of justification by faith is interpreted in relation to Jew-Gentile issues: Paul is affirming that Gentiles belong equally to God's people on the basis of faith. This point of view is seen in 3:27–29: After mentioning “works of the law,” Paul asks whether God is the God of the Jews only and not also of the Gentiles. In other words, the reference to “works of the law” evokes the question of Jewish ethnic prerogatives. However, this passage is followed by verses that support the traditional understanding of the law (4:4–5). Here, Paul speaks of “works” more generally as human efforts that earn wages, in contrast to God's free grace (Das, “Paul and Works of Obedience”). Despite the different approaches to the law, Paul clearly regards

salvation as derived exclusively from the death of Christ—the only atoning sacrifice of value (3:21–26).

Recent scholarship on Romans also includes Campbell's challenge of what he calls classical "justification theory" (Campbell, *Deliverance*). Campbell contends that Paul is combating in Romans the reasoning of opponents—or more likely a single opponent whom Campbell calls "the Teacher" and quotes at length at various points. Campbell ascribes large blocks of Romans to this false "Teacher," an interlocutor with whom Paul presumably engages throughout the letter. By doing so, Campbell is able to deny that these texts—which are often used to support the classical approach to justification—represent Paul's own viewpoint. For instance, according to Campbell, God's handing people over to the consequences of their sins (1:18–32); the strict judgment on the basis of people's deeds (2:6–11); and the accountability of the whole world before God (3:19) are all ideas that do not actually reflect Paul's own point of view but rather express the perspective of "the Teacher." To substantiate his thesis, Campbell ultimately appeals to 16:17–20, which includes a warning against false teachers.

The "Teacher" recognized by Campbell is never explicitly identified in the text of Romans, and Paul provides no signals for his readers that the views of 1:18–32; 2:6–11; 3:19 are not actually his own. Romans 16:17–20 refers not to a single "Teacher," but to false teachers in general. Furthermore, Campbell does not reckon with the challenge posed by Sandnes (*Belly and Body*). The description of potential opponents as "belly worshipers"—that is, as people guilty of excess—hardly supports a law-observant teaching (Das, *Solving*, 44–48).

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A. ANDREW DAS

**ROME** (Ρώμη, *Rōmē*). Capital city of the Roman Republic and Roman Empire. Located in west-central Italy on the east bank of the Tiber River. The largest and most influential city in the known world by the time of Jesus' birth.

### Location and Dates of Existence

Rome was established in 753 BC as a formal city-state. Its history can be divided into three governmental periods: Regal (753–510 BC), Republic (510–31 BC), and Imperial (31 BC—AD 476).

The first century Roman historian Livy recounted that the location of Rome's beginnings was chosen by the gods (*History of Rome*, 1.7). Rome originated in the plains of Latium with its seven famed hills: Cermalus, Palatium, Velia, Cispius, Fagutalis, Oppius, and Sucusa (compare Rev 13:1; 17:9). The hills and their marshy valleys made Rome difficult to attack. Its connection to the Tiber River provided fertile land for farming and herding, and its proximity to the Mediterranean Sea allowed for trade and easy access to the rest of the Mediterranean world.

### Biblical Relevance

The word Ρώμη (*Rōmē*) is only found eight times in the New Testament and the word "Romans" (Ρώμαῖος, *Rōmaios*) twelve times, with the majority of these occurrences in the Acts of the Apostles.

### Gospels

The first notable mention of Rome occurs in Luke's birth narrative where Caesar Augustus (emperor from 31 BC–AD 14) decreed a census of the inhabited world (Luke 2:1). This is one of 18 references to Caesar in the Gospels (e.g., Matt 22:17; Mark 12:14; John 19:12).

### *Paul's Letters*

Paul had not yet visited Rome when he wrote his letter to the church at Rome (Rom 1:11–13). Whether the church in Rome was predominately Jewish (Baur, *Paul the Apostle*, 321ff) or Gentile (Dunn, *Romans*, xlv) is still debated. Both Jewish and Gentile Christians lived in Rome during Paul's time. Paul's letter addresses divisions that were present between these two groups (Rom 11:17–24; 14:1–15:3). Suetonius and Josephus both report that in AD 19, Emperor Tiberius expelled Jews from Rome fearing that Jewish customs were becoming too influential among many leading Roman citizens (Suetonius, *Tiberius* 36.6; Josephus, *Antiquities* 18.3.5).

In AD 49, Emperor Claudius expelled Jews from Rome due to disturbances, presumably between Jews and Jewish Christians over Christ (Suetonius, *Claudius*, 25; compare Acts 18:2). Dio Cassius states that during Claudius' reign, Jews had lost the right to assemble in the synagogue (*Roman History*, 60.6.6). The survival of the church in Rome must have been aided by Gentile Christian efforts and the church probably looked very different when large numbers of Jewish Christians returned, after Claudius died in AD 54 (Rom 16:3–5). Paul's writings purposefully address those existing social tensions.

In Romans 13:1–7, Paul addresses the social-political setting in Rome when he exhorts believers to pay taxes and be subject to the governing authorities. Animosity likely existed toward Roman government resulting from Claudius' expulsion. The Roman historian Tacitus also reported that during Nero's reign, there were complaints about the greed of tax collectors (*Annals*, 13.50). Without doubt, Christians were not excluded from the situation.

### **History**

The most popular foundation myth involves Romulus and Remus, twin brothers whose supposed parents were the god Mars and a royal Vestal virgin (see Roman Religions and the Imperial Cult). Romulus and Remus fought over the potential site of their proposed new city, and sought the counsel of the gods to determine who would be its founder and ruler. Romulus won the favor of the gods, eventually killing Remus. "Thus Romulus became the sole ruler and the city, so founded, was given its founder's name" (Livy, *History of Rome*, 1.7).

### *The Kings*

Between 753–510 BC, Rome was ruled by seven kings: Romulus, Numa Pompilius, Tullus Hostilius, Ancus Marcius, Tarquinius Priscus, Servius Tullius, and Tarquinius Superbus. During this period, Rome's internal structure was greatly developed. The Greek historian Plutarch credits Romulus with the creation of social, political and military institutes (Plutarch, *Romulus*, 11f; compare Livy, *History of Rome*, 1.8) and Numa Pompilius (715–673 BC), with religious organization (Plutarch, *Numa*, 6–9). The sixth king, Servius Tullius (579–534 BC), was the first to issue a Roman census (compare Luke 2:1), used to organize adult males by wealth and residence and dividing them into military classes (Boatwright, Gargola & Talbert, *The Romans*, 43).

**Archaeological Discoveries.** The discovery of a large cemetery, *necropolis*, dating back to seventh and sixth century BC, shows that Rome's population grew considerably at that time. Archaeologists have discovered Greek pottery from this time period along the Tiber River, and offer it as proof that early inhabitants were already in contact with distant lands and the Tiber

River was possibly already a market and trade port (Boatwright, Gargola & Talbert, *The Romans*, 34). A mid-eighth century wall discovered along the northeast slopes of the Palatine hill shows a highly developed community (compare Plutarch, *Romulus*, 11). Also built during this period were many religious temples.

**Treaty with Carthage.** Rome's external expansion and reputation during the time is represented in a treaty with the North African city of Carthage near the end of this period. Polybius, a Greek historian, reports the treaty as follows: "There is to be friendship between the Romans and their allies and the Carthaginians and their allies on these terms: The Romans and their allies not to sail with long ships beyond the Fair Promontory ... if any Roman come to the Carthaginian province in Sicily, he shall enjoy equal rights with the others. The Carthaginians shall do no wrong to the peoples of Ardea, Antium ... or any other city of the Latins who are subject to Rome ... they shall keep their hands off their cities, and if they take any city shall deliver it up to the Romans undamaged. They shall build no fort in the Latin territory." (*Histories*, 3.22). Many specifics may be gleaned from this treaty: Rome had long sailing ships and had potentially sailed across the Mediterranean Sea to Africa; Rome had subjected many Latin cities and probably made alliance with others; Rome was seen as ruler and rightful beneficiary to all of Italy.

### *The Republic*

Tarquinius Superbus (534–509 BC), the last king, was reportedly a tyrant and was therefore expelled (Livy, *History of Rome*, 1.49, 60); thus began the era of the Roman Republic (510–31 BC). This period was marked by greater structuring of the political system, as well as territory expansion.

**Political Structure.** The first centuries of the Republic were characterized by a long struggle between two opposing groups: the patricians and the plebeians. The patricians were the wealthy elite who gained power during the Regal period. The plebeians far outnumbered the patricians, consisting mainly of the poor and some middle class, possibly including all Roman citizens who were not patricians (Boatwright, Gargola & Talbert, *The Romans*, 54). By the fourth century, the political structure of the Republic consisted of the consuls, the senate, and the assembly.

The consuls were two elected officials, usually one patrician and one plebeian, who served for one year as heads of the government. The pair ran the government, chose the senators, directed the military, acted as judges, and during times of emergency could appoint a dictator. Each official had veto power over the other and, therefore, had to agree on all decisions.

The senators consisted primarily of patricians with life-long appointments. They began as a group of 100 members and grew to a possible 1000 by the time of the Empire. The senators advised the consuls and the assembly, administered the finances, approved or disapproved of laws made by the assembly, supervised state religion, dealt with matters of foreign relations, and appointed governors. In first and second century BC, senators were a powerful influence behind Rome yielding great influence over both the consuls and assembly. The assembly, which consisted of all adult male Roman citizens, was an event rather than a group. Assemblies were held primarily for elections and, for those present, voting.

### **Other Data**

Rome housed magnificent public buildings; it was home to grand architecture and an abundance of temples. These shrines were built in honor of numerous Roman and foreign deities. Roman commanders often made vows to build new temples or adorn existing ones if they proved victorious in their battles. Augustus sought to revive the old Roman religion and built new

temples for all the Roman gods. Many beautiful forums and basilicas were constructed for political and legal use. Impressive aqueducts brought water long distances to supply the public baths and lavatories, leading to an intricate drainage system. The Romans also built many theaters, amphitheaters, chariot race tracks and stadiums. Some of the theaters held as many as 14,000, people and the largest race track had a seating capacity of 250,000. The city also contained many markets, shops, libraries, defensive walls, and other fortifications.

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ROB A. FRINGER

**ROME, PROVINCES OF, EASTERN** Regions of the Near East under Roman control, which began with the campaigns of Pompey the Great during the mid-60s BC and continued through aggressive imperial expansion into former Seleucid territory. In the second century AD, Rome's eastern provinces included Syria, Judaea, Arabia, Armenia, Assyria and Mesopotamia.

#### Rome's Eastward Expansion

Roman rule came to the Near East during the first half of the first century BC. By the time of Christ, the authority of Rome extended throughout the Levant. Roman involvement in the land beyond the Euphrates began in the mid-70s BC with the Third Mithridatic War, which also opened the door into Palestine. Several wars were fought in Mesopotamia into the first century AD.

During the first century BC, Pompey brought Judaea and the surrounding regions into the Roman Empire. Pompey first entered the eastern theater in the early 60s BC to flush out pirates disrupting trade on the Mediterranean Sea. He then began a long series of campaigns beginning in western Asia Minor (modern Turkey) before moving west and south into Syria, Judaea, and Nabataea. Syria became a Roman military center and served as a legionary headquarters. Pompey laid siege to Jerusalem in 63 BC and soon after divided the territory into districts.

By the early second century AD, the Roman Empire extended from Spain and Britain to Egypt and what is now Iraq. Its territory encompassed the entire Mediterranean Sea, which they called "our sea" (Latin: *mare nostrum*). One of the largest threats to Roman interests in the Near East was the Parthian Empire, which held territory from the Euphrates River east into modern day Iran. From AD 114–117, Trajan undertook a series of campaigns in an attempt to permanently annex the territory. Although expansion into Mesopotamia eventually was achieved, the Roman frontier would not progress much farther east. Trajan's campaign against Parthia brought a new phase of Roman and Near Eastern relations (Millar, *The Roman Near East*, 99). Rome's aggressive involvement in the region over the next several centuries culminated in the

shift of power from the western empire to the east (Lightfoot, “Trajan’s Parthian War,” 114, 125–6).

### **Roman Influence on Early Christianity**

The expansion of Roman rule over the land of the Bible had an effect on the development of early Christianity. The influence of Hellenism meant the cities were the basic unit of management and regional identity in much of the Roman East. This civic pride is evident in the letters of Paul, who describes himself as “a Jew, from Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no ordinary city” (Acts 21:39 NIV). Paul’s status as a Roman citizen brought him opportunities to move freely throughout the empire on his missionary journeys.

With Pompey’s victory in Judaea and the end of the independent Hasmonean Kingdom, the Romans placed client rulers in charge of the territory’s districts. Herod the Great, with the blessing of Caesar Augustus, consolidated his rule over the region, setting the stage for the events related in the Gospels accounts of Christ’s birth. Roman control also facilitated the spread of the gospel, as sea travel became common throughout the eastern Mediterranean and as Roman roads made land travel easier.

After Rome conquered Judaea, the Jews fought several wars of rebellion. The First Jewish Revolt resulted in disaster for the Judaeans and the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple in AD 70. The Second Jewish Revolt took place among diaspora communities in AD 115–117. The Third Jewish War, also known as the Bar Kochba Revolt, lasted from AD 132–136 and brought complete devastation to the Jewish homeland.

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PAUL J. MARTIN

**ROME, PROVINCES OF, WESTERN** An overview of the Roman Empire’s provinces in Hispania, Gaul, Britannia, Germania, the Alps, Illyricum, Italy, the western Mediterranean, and Africa.

### **Introduction: Roman Provincial Governance**

The province was the foundational administrative unit for territories outside of Italy throughout the Principate (27 BC–AD 284), with administrative *imperium* (power to command) granted to a proconsul, pro praetore, or procurator as governor of a province.

Imperial provinces were under the *imperium* of the emperor, who appointed a *legatus Augusti pro praetore* (ambassador of Augustus acting praetor) to administer the province as an imperial deputy. These provinces included regions prone to insurrection or in which military legions were stationed.

Within senatorial provinces, a proconsul was appointed from within the Senate to govern the province for a one-year term. Senatorial provinces had usually been thoroughly Romanized, with the provincial population being acculturated and integrated into the empire. Because of this, legions were not stationed in these provinces.

The organization of the provinces varied throughout the Principate. The sections below are based on the provincial organization under Marcus Aurelius (ca. AD 180).

## The Provinces of Hispania

Rome occupied Hispania's southern and eastern regions from the end of the third century BC, though the province was not consolidated in its entirety until 19 BC. Hispania was organized into three provinces in the imperial period: Hispania Ulterior was divided into Baetica and Lusitania, and Hispania Citerior became Tarraconensis.

The population of Hispania comprised Celts and Iberians, the descendants of Punic settlers in the coastal regions, and a substantial population of Italian settlers, especially in the southern province of Baetica (Goodman, *Roman World*, 223–7).

### *Baetica and Eastern Tarraconensis*

Baetica, including the region of Andalusia, and eastern Tarraconensis on the Mediterranean coast of Spain, were thoroughly Romanized, with an urban Roman culture and an economy that was integrated into the Roman Mediterranean through a prosperous trade in agricultural products, especially olive oil. The settled Italian elite within the province were highly involved in the politics of Rome in the first and second centuries AD.

### *Lusitania and Western Tarraconensis*

Lusitania, comprising Portugal south of the Douro and part of western Spain, and northwestern Tarraconensis remained largely undeveloped and nonintegrated with the Roman Empire. Administration within Lusitania was largely dependent on local elites within *civitates*, which adhered to the preexisting boundaries of tribes. Five colonies were established within the province of Lusitania, with Emerita Augusta as the provincial capital.

### *Central Tarraconensis*

In the interior of Tarraconensis, Hispano-Roman interaction was defined by military occupation and subjugation. The mountainous tribes, which had resisted Roman rule, were forcibly resettled in the central plateau, where three legions were stationed. However, by the mid-first century AD, only one legion was stationed in Tarraconensis.

## The Provinces of Gaul

Rome's provinces in Gaul included Narbonensis, Aquitania, Lugdunensis, and Belgica. Romanization was fairly smooth for Narbonensis, largely due to its location on the Mediterranean coast. In Gaul's other provinces, efforts to integrate with Roman society were met with fierce resistance but eventually succeeded with help from local elites (Goodman, *Roman World*, 229–34; 237–42).

### *Gallia Narbonensis*

Gallia Narbonensis, in southeastern France, was thoroughly Romanized during the first centuries BC and AD and integrated with Roman Italy and the Roman Empire. The province got its start as Gallia Transalpina, which was annexed in 121 BC and was governed from the colony of Narbo Martius (Narbonne) along with Massalia (Marseilles), a Greek colony and the only other urban community. Julius Caesar's arrival in 58 BC began the process of Romanization and the development of Roman urban settlements. Those communities expanded under Augustus, and the province was renamed Narbonensis in 27 BC. By the mid-first century AD, Narbonensis had been so thoroughly Romanized that the Senate considered it an extension of Italy. Narbonensis prospered from its integration within the Roman Mediterranean, as it imported and distributed goods for northern provinces.

### *Aquitania, Lugdunensis, and Belgica*

In the provinces of Aquitania, Lugdunensis, and Belgica, the process of Romanization caused considerable internal distress in Gallic society. Between 58–50 BC, Julius Caesar conquered central and northern Gaul, organizing the conquered territories into three provinces:

- Aquitania, along the western coast of France;
- Lugdunensis, extending from northwestern France to the northern border of Narbonensis and north of Aquitania;
- Belgica, including northern France, Belgium, and Luxembourg. The indigenous Gauls, a Celtic people, resisted Romanization, which disestablished their traditional social order. They staged several insurrections against Roman rule in the late first century BC and the first century AD. The Gauls maintained a strong sense of Celtic distinction and declared their own empire (*imperium Galliarum*) during the civil wars of AD 69.

To incorporate these provinces into the empire, Roman authorities worked with the Gallic Julii, local elites who served as auxiliary commanders under Julius Caesar and Augustus. In exchange for their cooperation, Julii were granted citizenship and magistracies of towns, and they competed to preside over the imperial cult at Lugdunum (Lyon). The Roman villa also helped encourage Romanization among Gallic elites, who then extended the process to the lower classes. Celtic administration by chieftains and warrior-elites often continued, but these roles were now defined by Rome.

### **The Province of Britannia**

Britannia—including the majority of Great Britain, annexed in AD 43—was an imperial province that never fully consolidated under Roman control, with intermittent insurrections along the northern border.

Great Britain's inhabitants included the Britons—a Celtic tribal people—in the south and the Caledonii—whose territories were within modern Scotland—in the north. Primarily due to its remote location, Britannia never integrated with the wider Roman Empire to the extent seen in provinces on the European continent.

The first centuries BC and AD were marked by conflict and limited progress for Roman rule in Britannia:

- 55–54 BC: Julius Caesar failed in his attempt to invade Great Britain but succeeded in extending Roman political influence to the Britons.
- AD 43: Aulus Plautius conquered the south and east of England; Claudius annexed the province of Britannia and established its capital at Camulodunum (Colchester).
- 48–78: Rome conquered Wales and some northern areas as far as the lowlands of Scotland.
- 60/1: The Boudicean Revolt, a result of Roman offense to the Iceni royal family, ravaged Camulodunum, Verulamium, and Londinium (London), which became the provincial capital in 61.
- Late first century AD: Uprisings along the northern frontier with the Caledonii resulted in Rome's withdrawal from northern Scotland.

Between AD 122–128, the northern frontier was consolidated with the construction of Hadrian's Wall. In 142, Rome pushed this frontier farther north to the Forth-Clyde Isthmus, where the Antonine Wall was constructed. Roman forces withdrew from the Antonine Wall around 162 and reoccupied Hadrian's Wall. The northern frontier was never subdued and incursions by the Caledonii were a persistent threat.

Romanization of Britannia finally resulted with the emergence of a Romano-British culture. The presence of numerous Roman settlers in the colonies—in addition to three to four legions stationed in the province since AD 43—helped cultivate a hybrid society that combined elements from Rome and the Celtic culture of the Britons (Salway, *Frontier People*; Potter & Johns, *Roman Britain*; Mattingly, *Imperial Possession*; Goodman, *Roman World*, 234–42).

### **The Provinces of Germania**

Germania Superior and Germania Inferior constituted the military-occupied frontier between Roman territory and the tribal lands east of the Rhine, called Germania Magna (Goodman, *Roman World*, 243–47).

As the Gallic Wars ended around 50 BC, Julius Caesar established the northeastern frontier of the Empire at the Rhine River. However, the Rhine was deficient as a frontier, as it did not prevent the persistent westward migrations of Germanic tribes from Germania Magna. The Augustan campaign, beginning in 17 BC, attempted to set a new frontier further east, at the Elbe River, but ended with Rome's withdrawal from Germania Magna after three legions were defeated under Varus in 9 AD. The campaigns of Germanicus in AD 14–16 concluded with the frontier reverting to the Rhine.

During the late first century AD, the region was divided into Germania Superior, which included both banks of the upper Rhine extending east to the border of Raetia (see Alpine Provinces, below), and Germania Inferior, consisting of the lower Rhine on the west bank. These provinces were defined by prolonged military conflict with tribes from Germania Magna to the east, and the need to sustain numerous Roman legions resulted in increased agricultural production, trade and economic prosperity. The area's resident Germanic and Celtic tribes were Romanized through the military's influence, and Germania provided a substantial number of recruits for Rome's legions starting in the first century AD. Upon retiring, these soldiers received Roman citizenship. *Coloniae*, established as long-term homes for soldiers and veterans, constituted the majority of urban communities within Germania and supported Rome's defenses along the frontier.

Under the Flavian emperors (who ruled AD 69–96), Germania Superior was extended to join the Danube and Germania frontiers. Hadrian (AD 117–138) consolidated the frontier with fortifications, which allowed Rome to reduce its military presence from eight legions to four.

### **The Alpine Provinces**

The provinces of the Alps were organized as a series of imperial provinces intended to consolidate Roman control of the Alps and prevent southward migration of the Germanic tribes.

The tribes inhabiting the Alps were Celtic and Illyrian, but they lacked a sense of unified identity and offered little resistance to Roman occupation. Roman disinterest in Romanizing the Alps resulted in little imperial interference in these provinces so long as they kept up tribute payments (Goodman, *Roman World*, 247–8)

#### *Alpes Maritimae and Alpes Cottiae*

Alpes Maritimae, the southernmost Alpine province, was established around 14 BC to consolidate Rome's control of the land route between Italy and southeastern France.

Alpes Cottiae, sandwiched between Alpes Maritimae and Alpes Graiae, was established under a local chief, Cottius, instated as prefect by Augustus. For a brief period, Alpes Cottiae was a client kingdom under Claudius before Nero annexed it in AD 63.

#### *Alpes Graiae, Alpes Poeninae, and Raetia*

Rome annexed Alpes Graiae (often grouped with Alpes Poeninae) and Raetia to solidify the empire's control of the passes through the Alps and prevent Germanic tribes from migrating south. Raetia—which included parts of modern Austria, Switzerland, Germany, Italy, and Liechtenstein—was conquered by Tiberius and Drusus and annexed by Augustus in 15 BC. Alpes Graiae was organized around AD 47 under Claudius in order to control the Little St. Bernard Pass and, when consolidated with Alpes Poeninae, the Great St. Bernard Pass.

### *Noricum*

Noricum, just east of Raetia, stretched north to the Danube and south to upper Italy. It was an independent monarchy established by a confederation of Celtic tribes that had subjugated the indigenous Illyrian tribes. The Noric kingdom came under Roman control in 15 BC but remained unorganized until the reign of Claudius (AD 41–54), when it was established as an imperial province. The Noric monarchy seems to have persisted from 15 BC until the mid-first century AD. Noricum served as a significant border province, and the frontier along the Danube was fortified under the Flavian emperors (AD 69–96). By the late second century, a legion was permanently stationed in Noricum in response to barbarian migrations along the Danube frontier (Alföldy, *Noricum*).

## **The Provinces of Illyricum**

### *Dalmatia, Pannonia Superior, and Pannonia Inferior*

Dalmatia and Pannonia were created from the short-lived Roman province of Illyricum, which was established around 32/27 BC only to be divided in two roughly 40 years later (Wilkes, *Dalmatia*; Goodman, *Roman World*, 248–53).

The province of Dalmatia was on the northwest corner of the Balkan peninsula, with the Adriatic Sea to its west, and included parts of modern Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Montenegro. North of Dalmatia, Pannonia was bordered Noricum to the west and by the Danube to the north and east. Early in the second century AD, Pannonia was divided into upper (western) and lower (eastern) regions.

Rome established control of the eastern Adriatic region through a series of conflicts stretching from the third century BC into the first century AD.

- 229–168 BC: Rome and the Illyrian kingdoms of the Balkans clashed intermittently during the Illyrian Wars, which concluded with the establishment of a Roman protectorate of Southern Illyria.
- 35–33 BC: The campaigns of Augustus further established Roman control of the Dalmatian coast.
- 32/27 BC: The province of Illyricum was organized in 32/27 BC.
- 13–9 BC: Rome expanded and solidified its authority in the region with the Pannonian War.
- AD 6–9: The Great Illyrian Revolt resulted in the division of Illyricum into the provinces of Dalmatia and Pannonia.

Sometime during Trajan's reign (AD 98–117)—likely around AD 102–107, between the first and second Dacian wars—Pannonia was divided into Pannonia Superior in the west and Pannonia Inferior in the east. Late in the second century, Rome was involved in intermittent but intensive campaigns along the Danube frontier against the Marcomanni and the Sarmatians.

These provinces were Romanized largely through military occupation, with two legions stationed in Dalmatia and three in Pannonia in AD 14. Rome recruited many of these soldiers

from the surrounding areas, and participation in the military assimilated the local populace into the empire. By AD 125, Dalmatia was no longer garrisoned, while Pannonia Superior had three legions and Pannonia Inferior had one (Wilkes, *Dalmatia*; Moscy, *Pannonia*).

### **The Italian Peninsula and Sicilia**

#### *Italy*

Italy, which was not a province, was the center of the Roman Empire throughout the Principate (27 BC–AD 284).

When Rome emerged as Italy's preeminent state, the populace of the Italian peninsula was comprised of numerous ethnic groups, including Samnites, Celts, Etruscans, and Greeks. Through persistent campaigning between 396–218 BC, the Romans conquered the peninsula.

After the Social War (91–88 BC), all free-born Italians were granted Roman citizenship. Throughout the first century BC, Italy's regionalism declined and a sense of unity took hold, as soldiers from various locales served together in the legions, veterans settled together in colonies, and civil wars took their tolls. Italy's boundary in 42 BC encompassed lands from the peninsula's southern tip to the Rubicon River, and it soon expanded to take in Cisalpine Gaul, from the Rubicon to the Alps.

The empire gave Italy special privileges, including tax exemptions for Italian farms and imperial patronage for building projects. Beyond the vicinity of Rome, however, the benefits of imperial patronage were less prominent, and Rome's influence on daily life varied throughout Italy. During the last half of the first century AD, Italian industrial and agricultural exports seem to have shifted from the provinces to local markets, with Rome itself a primary market. In the third century, Italy's importance within the Roman Empire dwindled, and in AD 324 Constantinople was declared the imperial capital.

#### *Sicilia*

The first provincial acquisition of the Roman republic, Sicilia was annexed in 241 BC after the First Punic War. The province included both Sicily and Malta.

Sicilia had a long history of foreign settlement. The indigenous Sicels were subjugated to Greek colonies in the east and Punic colonies in the west. Sicilia was an agrarian province, with its importance to Rome coming from its grain supply. Rome made no efforts to Romanize the province before the late first century BC, and the established Greek culture and language.

### **The Provinces of Corsica and Sardinia**

Despite their centrality in the western Mediterranean, the islands of Corsica and Sardinia were of subsidiary interest to the empire, and Roman control was never fully consolidated.

The mountainous interiors of the islands remained beyond Roman interference. Colonies were established along the coastal plain of Sardinia, occupied primarily by descendants of the Carthaginians, who seem to have persisted in their own religion and culture beneath a facade of Romanization (Goodman, *Roman World*, 227–28).

### **The Provinces of Africa**

The western provinces of North Africa prospered from the exploitation of agriculture during the first through third centuries AD, when these regions were remarkably tranquil.

Roman engagement in North Africa began with the Punic wars against Carthage (264–146 BC). Rome established the province of Africa (Africa Vetus) in Northern Tunisia through conquest, with the neighboring client kingdoms of Mauretania and Numidia attempting to

maintain a tenuous client-patron relationship with Rome. Numidia was annexed by Rome with Eastern Numidia in 46 BC as the province of Africa Nova (Raven, *Rome in Africa*; Mattingly and Hitchner, “Roman Africa”; Goodman, *Roman World*, 229–306).

### *Africa Proconsularis*

In 25 BC, Africa Vetus, Africa Nova, and Western Numidia merged to form the province of Africa Proconsularis, which included northern Libya, Tunisia, and eastern Algeria. The province’s sole legion subdued resistance by 6 BC. Italian settlers extensively supplemented the populace—who were primarily Punic settlers and Berbers—in the first centuries BC and AD. A proconsul administered the senatorial province from the *colonia* of Carthage, but after AD 37 the military force was controlled separately by a *legatus Augusti*. Agricultural estates in Africa Proconsularis attracted considerable external investments, especially from Italy, and the province prospered through selling olive oil and grain to Rome and throughout the Mediterranean.

### *Mauretania Caesariensis and Mauretania Tingitana*

The Moors, a Berber people who possessed few urban communities prior to Roman annexation, occupied Mauretania Caesariensis and Mauretania Tingitana. Conflict in Mauretania between urbanized culture and nomadism brought resistance to Rome, as nomadic movements were restricted. Mauretania maintained independence as a Roman client kingdom until its annexation in 33 BC. In 25 BC, Rome appointed Juba II a client king, and he was succeeded by his son Ptolemy, who ruled until Gaius executed him in AD 40. In AD 44, Mauretania was divided into Caesariensis in the east and Tingitana in the west. These provinces also prospered from exporting olive oil.

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BENJAMIN IOSET

**ROME, REPUBLIC OF** Denotes either the Roman constitutional system or the time period (traditionally 509–49/27 BC) during which Rome expanded from a small city to an empire.

### Overview

During the period of the Republic, a span of about 500 years, Rome saw the abolition of its monarchy, the establishment of a republican political system, and finally the fall of the Republic under the weight of the increasing internal conflicts. At the end of the Republic, Octavian, the

emperor Augustus, established an imperial government that survived five centuries in the West and fifteen in the East.

For two centuries after adopting republic-style government around 500 BC, Rome annexed its neighbors through military, political, and social means. It began by incorporating nearby villages, then expanded throughout Italy. By the end of the period, Roman rule spanned the Mediterranean world.

Throughout the years of the Roman Republic, a lasting Graeco-Roman culture took shape: a blend of Greek influences and local Italian and Roman traditions. This culture is reflected in the literature, art, philosophy, architecture, law, rhetoric, and everyday life of the inhabitants. Roman government and culture have had long-reaching impacts on human civilization, from the senatorial elite of the Roman empire (e.g., Tacitus, *Agricola*, 2.2–3; *Annals*, 1.1.1; *Histories*, 1.1.1), to Christians of late antiquity, to the political thinkers of the Renaissance, and founding fathers of the United States.

## History

### *The Republic's Origins*

Ancient sources (detailed below, but most notably Livy) present the shift from monarchy to republic as part of the drama of the Tarquin family. According to this tradition, L. Tarquinius Superbus (Tarquin the Proud) seized the throne after murdering his father-in-law, Servius. He ruled as a tyrant from 534 BC until the patricians overthrew him in 509 BC. The revolt was prompted by the rape of Lucretia (the wife of a royal kinsman) by king's second son, and her subsequent suicide. (Cornell provides a family tree as presented by Fabius Pictor, the first Roman historian; *Beginnings*, 123). In place of the monarchy, the aristocrats established a republican government under two annually elected consuls.

Modern scholars have raised questions about the historicity of this traditional account. Some suggest that main characters like Lucretia and Lars Porsenna might not have existed at all (Alföldi, *Early Rome*, 84; Werner, *Beginn Republik*, 377–86). Some scholars believe the transition to a republic was not a drastic change, but a gradual process, with successive forms of republican magistracy introduced until the consular system finally took hold (compare Cornell, *Beginnings*, 215–41; Brunt, *Social Conflicts*; and Raaflaub, *Social Struggles*). Brunt accepts the traditional history (Brunt, *Social Conflicts*, 44), whereas Cornell proposes the tradition is accurate only in that a revolution around 500 BC created the Roman Republic.

### *The Early Republic*

After the monarchy fell, Rome consolidated power and extended its regional dominance. The Latins (*latini*) revolted against the young Republic, which led to the battle of Lake Regillus and the treaty of Spurius Cassius Vecellinus (*foedus Cassianum*) in 493 BC. The “Latin League” (so called in modern literature) was formed as a military alliance between the Latins and the Romans that enabled both to resist invasions by the Sabines, Aequi, and Volsci throughout the first half of the fifth century BC. Following this, the Romans conquered and colonized southern Latium; they also overtook their longtime rival, the Etruscan city of Veii, which they destroyed in 396 BC (for a list of wars fought from 366–266 BC, see Oakley, “Early Republic,” 23–4).

The Republic experienced a temporary setback when the Gauls sacked the city of Rome in 390 BC (by the Varronian date, but probably in 386 BC; see, Cornell, *Beginnings*, 314; and Polybius, *Rise*, 1.6.1). Following its recovery, Rome expanded south (Samnium and Campania)

and north (Tarquinius and Caere). At times, the Republic's rise strained its relationships with Latin allies (especially in the Latin war of 341 BC).

The long series of conquests beyond peninsular Italy helped the patrician-plebeian elite consolidate power by drastically increasing their wealth. The story of these two groups in early republican Rome is often called the "Conflict of the Orders." (For details, see Cornell, *Beginnings*, 242–71; Brunt, *Social Conflicts*; Raaflaub, *Social Struggles*; Eder, *Staat und Staatlichkeit*. For significant events of plebeian inclusion in the political process, see the timeline below. See Oakley, "The Early Republic," 17–19, for a summary of plebeian agitation against patrician rule from 494–287 BC.) The widening gap between the rich and the poor led to bitter tension and social conflict.

### *The Late Republic*

After gaining control over peninsular Italy, Rome acquired Sicily, challenging the Carthaginians in the First Punic War (264–241 BC). Upon Rome's victory, Sicily became the first Roman province. By 146 BC, Rome had fought three Punic Wars and three Macedonian wars, establishing its dominance in the Mediterranean world (e.g., destroying Corinth in 146 BC).

In the following decades, military struggles on several fronts put added stress on internal politics, ultimately leading to civil war. The ruling class was unable to deal with the many problems facing the Republic. Wealthy nobles gained power through armed force, Italian allies revolted to obtain citizenship (91–89 BC), and Mithridates VI of Pontus invaded the eastern provinces and was welcomed as a liberator by many. The senate appointed Sulla to lead an army against Mithridates, but P. Sulpicius Rufus and the plebeian assembly gave the command to Marius. Sulla marched on Rome and took the command for himself, murdering Sulpicius and expelling Marius. Once Sulla left to pursue Mithridates, Marius returned and seized power (87 BC). When Sulla returned after defeating Mithridates, civil war broke out. A victorious Sulla appointed himself as dictator in 81 BC.

In the 70s BC, Pompey and Crassus came to power as consuls, repealing most of Sulla's laws and restoring tribunal powers. These two later formed the First Triumvirate with Gaius Julius Caesar, a political alliance that gave them great power, both politically and militarily. For the last century, the senators had been losing power; now, under these military leaders, they became almost entirely powerless. After Crassus died in battle (53 BC), Pompey and Caesar began another civil war.

In 49 BC, Caesar invaded Italy and ousted Pompey, who fled to Egypt, where he was assassinated. Caesar established himself as dictator. Caesar was assassinated in 44 BC by a group of senators, but they were unable to restore the Republic. A second triumvirate took over: Mark Antony, M. Aemilius Lepidus, and Caesar Octavian (Augustus). After Antony and Octavian defeated Lepidus, they fought each other. Octavian won the battle of Actium (31 BC), and Mark Antony (along with Cleopatra VII of Egypt) committed suicide. Octavian thus became the first ruler of the Roman Empire.

The date of end of the Republic is varyingly associated with Caesar's assassination in 44 BC and with Octavian's assumption of the title "Augustus" in 27 BC.

### **Sources**

The main sources for the historical reconstruction of the Roman Republic are ancient literary sources, archaeology, papyrology, inscriptions, and coinage.

The chief literary sources for the period are Livy, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, and Polybius. Livy's history contained over 140 books or long sections, of which 35 remain. They cover the

foundation of Rome up to 167 BC. In his *Roman Antiquities*, Dionysius covers the foundation of Rome up to the First Punic War. Only the first 11 of his 20 books remain, along with short excerpts of the rest. Polybius' *The Rise of the Roman Empire* covers 118 years (264–146 BC, including the three Punic Wars. For a description of the sources these authors utilized, including the antiquarians and oral traditions, see Cornell, *Beginnings*, chapter one.)

Archaeological data related to the Roman Republic has become important for two reasons:

1. the scant nature of the literary evidence
2. Livy and Dionysius both wrote in the first century, hundreds of years after the earlier events, and Polybius wrote only one century earlier than them.

(For an overview of the archaeological data, see Holloway, *The Archaeology of Early Rome and Latium*; for examples of how the different forms of evidence come together in historical reconstruction, see Torelli, *Tota Italia: Essays in the Cultural Formation of Roman Italy*, and Smith, *Early Rome and Latium*).

### Timeline

The following timeline covers significant military, political and social events of the Roman Republic. All dates are BC. This information is based on Crawford's more expansive timeline (*Roman Republic*, 209–16):

509	Expulsion of the last king, Tarquinius Superbus; government falls into the hands of aristocratic families who annually elect two consuls and, in time of crisis, appoint a dictator
499 (or 96)	Rome defeats the Latins at the battle of Lake Regillus
494–93	First secession of the plebs, who gained the right to have five tribunes and a legislative assembly—the <i>concilium plebis</i>
451–50	Promulgation of the Twelve Tables by the <i>decemviri legibus scribundis</i>
449	Traditional date for Lex Valeria Horatia, which made <i>plebiscita</i> (decisions of the plebs) binding on the whole people
409	First plebeian quaestors
396	Destruction of Veii
390	Gauls capture and sack Rome

367	<i>Leges Liciniae Sextiae</i> limited the amount of land that could be held by the rich
364	First plebeian curule aedileship
356	First plebeian dictator, C. Marcius Rutilus
351	First plebeian censor, C. Marcius Rutilus
348	Second treaty between Carthage and Rome
336	First plebeian praetor
334	Foundation of Cales as the first Latin colony founded by Rome
327–304	First Samnite War
300	<i>Lex Ogulnia</i> opened the priesthoods of the pontiffs and augurs to plebeians
295	Victory at Sentinum; Rome defeats Gauls, Etruscans, Umbrians, and Samnites
280–275	Pyrrhus invades Italy and is defeated
264–41	First Punic War
255	Last invasion of the Gauls
229	First Illyrian War
219	Second Illyrian War
218–02	Second Punic War, defeat of Carthage at Zama; Africa ends the war
215	Alliance between Philip V of Macedon and Carthage
212/11	Alliance between Rome and Aetolia
206	End of first Macedonian War
200–197	Second Macedonian War

192–90	War with Antiochus III and the Seleucids; Antiochus III defeated at Nagesia in Asia
180	<i>Lex Villia annalis</i> regulates tenure of magistracies
171–68	Third Macedonian War
149–46	Third Punic War, ending with the sack of Carthage
146 BC	Sack of Corinth
134–32	Sicilian Slave War
133	Tribunate of Ti. Sempronius Gracchus; kingdom of Pergamum bequeathed to Rome by Attalus III
125	M. Fulvius Flaccus' proposal to grant citizenship to the Italians fails; revolt of Fregellae
123–22	Tribunates of C. Sempronius Gracchus
122–06	War against Jugurtha of Numidia
91	Outbreak of the Social War
88	Sulla marches on Rome; command of the army restored to Sulla
88–3	Sulla in the East
82–1	Sulla in office as dictator to reorganize the state
80	Second consulate of Sulla
74	Third Mithridatic War
73–1	Spartacus leads slave revolt
63	Settlement of the East by Pompey and the abolishment of the kingdom of Syria;

	consulate of Cicero and conspiracy of Catilina
60	First Triumvirate—a political alliance between Pompey, Crassus, and Caesar
49–5	Civil war between Caesar and Pompey
44	Caesar assassinated
31	Octavian’s victory at Actium
27	Octavian granted the honorific “Augustus” by the Senate

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## SPIRIT OF LIFE IN CHRIST JESUS

Romans 8 is one of the most important chapters in the New Testament. And verse 2 is where we find the Holy Spirit titled the “Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.”

The theme of Romans in righteousness, and Paul carefully develops his teaching on this vital biblical theme. In chapters 1–3, Paul demonstrates that “there is none righteous, no, not one” (3:10). Thus, it was necessary for Jesus to die for our sins if a righteous God would be free to forgive sinners. In chapters 4 and 5, Paul shows that God graciously acquits sinners who believe in Jesus and gives them a righteous standing in His sight.

In chapters 6–8, Paul shows that God’s gift of righteousness is more than a legal fiction. God intends to actually make us righteous. In chapter 6, Paul shows that righteous living is made possible by our union with Christ. Then, in chapter 7, Paul reveals that this is a struggle, especially given the fact that believers retain their sin nature until the Resurrection.

Clearly, righteous living is not something that is possible for us without divine help. Thus, in chapter 8, Paul presents the solution. He explains, “For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death” (v. 2). In this passage, “law” is used in the sense of “operating principle,” just as we call gravity a “law of nature.” Sin and death are active in us until the Resurrection. But the Holy Spirit is also active in us! And the Spirit is stronger than the sin within us!

Paul goes on in this vital chapter of Romans to encourage us. We can actually be the kind of person that God wants us to be, not because we have the strength in ourselves, but rather because we rely on the Lord to enable us. “He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you” (v. 11). Thus, the title “the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus” is one of the most precious and certainly most enabling of Scripture’s titles of the Holy Spirit.

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<sup>3</sup> Das, A. A. (2016). [Romans, Letter to the](#). In J. D. Barry, D. Bomar, D. R. Brown, R. Klippenstein, D. Mangum, C. Sinclair Wolcott, ... W. Widder (Eds.), *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.



## BIBLE BACKGROUND:

### RIGHTEOUSNESS

We believe in a righteous God, and we also believe that God calls us to live righteous lives. But the righteousness we believe in isn't some drab existence of following endless sets of rules. Instead, righteousness is a dynamic, positive, and exciting way of life. Our understanding of righteousness and how to become righteous is found in Scripture. In fact, righteousness is a theme that echoes through both the Old and New Testaments.

**Righteousness in the Old Testament.** The Hebrew words translated “righteous” are also rendered “just” and “justice” in our English versions. The underlying idea is that of conformity to a norm. A person is “righteous” when his or her actions are in harmony with established moral standards. The only valid standard by which righteousness can be measured is the revealed will of God, and in the Old Testament that will is most clearly expressed in the Law of Moses.

In a deeper sense, the Old Testament often calls God righteous (Ps. 4:1; Is. 45:21). What God does is always righteous (Ps. 71:24), for all His actions are in harmony with His character. In fact it is the character of God, expressed in His revealed will, that is the ultimate standard of righteousness.

Despite the fact that “in [God’s] sight no one living is righteous” (Ps. 143:2), the Old Testament does speak of righteous men and women. The apparent conflict is resolved when we understand that such references are not to righteousness in an absolute sense, but rather in a comparative sense. These are people who lived in closer conformity to God’s will than others. For these individuals God promised blessings and rewards (Pss. 5:12; 112:6; 34:19; 119:121). But this comparative righteousness neither earned God’s favor nor His salvation. Rather, in the Old Testament era (as in the New Testament era) it was faith in God that led to righteousness and salvation (Gen. 15:6).

**Righteousness in the New Testament.** Some New Testament passages use “righteous” in the Old Testament sense of behavior that conforms to the Law (Matt. 1:19; 5:45; Mark 6:20). Nevertheless, the Old Testament concept of righteousness is transformed and enriched in the New Testament.

In Matthew 5:17–20, Jesus explores the relationship between the Law and righteousness. Christ assures His listeners that His teaching does not nullify the Law, but rather that their righteousness must exceed “the righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees.” This statement undoubtedly shocked Jesus’ listeners, for the Pharisees were dedicated to keeping the most insignificant provisions of the Mosaic Law, as applied by the rabbis.

Jesus then went on to give a series of illustrations that showed that God’s concern was not simply wrong action, but also the motives and passions behind them. When properly understood, the Law of Moses taught humankind that it was not enough for the actions of people to conform to the Law. Just as important was the necessity of people experiencing an inner transformation so that their heart and soul were in harmony with God.

In Romans 1:16 and 17, Paul explains that righteousness is a matter of faith, for the ultimate righteousness—that which God required—can only be imputed to those who by

nature are sinners. In 3:21–4:25, Paul shows that God’s call for righteousness has always been associated with faith. The Old Testament itself speaks of a righteousness that comes from God without reference to the Law (3:21), for Genesis 15:6 (NIV) tells us that God “credited” Abraham’s faith to him as a righteousness he did not have. In the same way, God today credits righteousness to the account of those who believe in Jesus. This is based on the sacrifice of Jesus, who died on the cross to pay for the sins of humankind.

But the Book of Romans goes beyond this issue of forensic, or legal, righteousness. God not only declares those who believe in Jesus to be righteous in His sight, but also so works in the lives of believers that they actually *become* righteous in their thoughts, actions, and words. This *becoming righteous* is the theme of chapters 6–8.

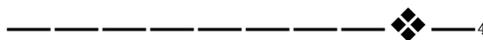
Believers are united by faith to Jesus, and in this union share in both His death and resurrection. Because of His gift of new life, our bodies can now become instruments of righteousness (ch. 6). While we cannot become righteous by our own effort or by trying to keep God’s Law (ch. 7), the Spirit can and will release us from our bondage to sin. Through an inner transformation, He enables us to live godly and righteous lives (ch. 8).

These things are possible, not because we force our actions to conform to an external standard, but rather because our actions flow from a character that is becoming more and more like God’s own holy nature. Assuredly, making us righteous is one of the most wonderful and awe-inspiring works of the Spirit of God!

Nevertheless, the Spirit’s work is a quiet one, and for us, Jesus is the key to making it a reality. We have forgiveness through faith in Him. Because of Jesus’ atoning sacrifice and subsequent resurrection from the dead, we are righteous in God’s sight. And through our union by faith with Jesus, we also have the promise of inner transformation. As we grow in our Christian life, we will actually become more and more righteous, for we will truly be like our Lord in what we think, say, and do.

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Giving alms to the needy is still considered in contemporary Judaism to be a significant “righteous act.”



## Keys to Romans

### The Kingdom and Personal Triumph

#### Kingdom Key: God’s Purpose in View

*The kingdom concept, which teaches that a life of dominion and victory is available in Christ, is biblical and obtainable. Jesus has indeed come to reinstate in the redeemed the Father’s original intent for His creatures: “Be fruitful, multiply... have dominion” (Gen. 1:28). This is not a glib*

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<sup>4</sup> Richards, L. (2001). [\*Every name of God in the Bible\*](#) (pp. 207–209). Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson.

*offer, nor is it grounded in human resources. The “triumphant life” is one that is (a) grounded in God’s Word, (b) learned through Christ’s Cross, and (c) developed through test, travail, and warfare.*

The Book of Romans concludes: “The God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly!” (16:20). This promise is true, but it is rooted in truth that calls us to understand the foundations for personal triumph. They are elaborated in Romans 8, though the entire epistle lays out the groundwork for settled faith on solid footings.

Triumph is gained and sustained:

1. By having the curse of condemnation broken from the soul, once and for all. Romans 8:1–1 asserts a *law of life*—that is, “in Christ Jesus” there is no longer in God’s presence a record assigning sin to those who have received Him as Savior (3:24–26). Therefore, peace of heart and mind may be constantly experienced (5:1–11).

2. By allowing the Holy Spirit to fill, lead, and lift us above the drive in our flesh to master our body and soul, to sustain patterns of sin in our lives (8:5–17). Walking in the fullness of the Spirit will release the power of Jesus’ resurrection life in us—power that will break the death-dealing force of sin and unworthy habits (8:11; 6:1–14).

3. By remembering that God has never promised trouble-free living, yet that He has guaranteed the certainty of our triumph through and beyond every trial (8:18–22). Remember (a) to confront every stressful circumstance with Holy Spirit-begotten hope (8:23–25), and (b) to enter into Holy Spirit-assisted intercession (8:26–27). Do this in the confidence that these means will secure God’s purpose for your life (8:28).

4. By rejoicing in the absolute commitment God has made to us to ensure our victory with Him through grace (8:29–32), and by answering any circumstance or lie of our Adversary (8:33–34) with this grand, biblical hymn about certainty of conquering: Romans 8:35–39!

### **Master Key: God’s Son Revealed**

The whole epistle is the story of God’s plan of redemption in Christ: the need for it (1:18–3:20), the detailed description of Christ’s work and its implications for Christians (3:21–11:36), and the application of the gospel of Christ to everyday life (12:1–16:27).

More specifically, Jesus Christ is our Savior, who obeyed God perfectly as our representative (5:18–19), and who died as our substitute sacrifice (3:25; 5:6–8). He is the One in whom we must have faith for salvation (1:16–17; 3:22; 10:9–10). Through Christ we have many blessings: reconciliation to God (5:11); righteousness and eternal life (5:18–21); identification with Him in His death, burial, and resurrection (6:3–5); being alive to God (6:11); freedom from condemnation (8:1); eternal inheritance (8:17); suffering with Him (8:17); being glorified with Him (8:17); being made like Him (8:29); and the fact that He even now prays for us (8:34). Indeed, all of the Christian life seems to be lived through Him: prayer (1:8), rejoicing (5:11), exhortation (15:30), glorifying God (16:27), and, in general, living to God and obeying Him (6:11; 13:14).

**Key Word:** *The Righteousness of God*

*The theme of Romans is found in 1:16, 17: God offers the gift of His righteousness to everyone who comes to Christ by faith.*

**Key Verses:** Romans 1:16–17; 3:21–25

**Key Chapters:** Romans 6—8

*Foundational to all teaching on the spiritual life is the central passage of Romans 6—8. The answers to the questions of how to be delivered from sin, how to live a balanced life under grace, and how to live the victorious Christian life through the power of the Holy Spirit are all contained here.*

**Power Key: God's Spirit at Work**

The Holy Spirit gives power in preaching the gospel and in working miracles (15:19), dwells in all who belong to Christ (8:9–11), and gives us life (8:11). He also makes us progressively more holy in daily life, empowering us to obey God and overcome sin (2:29; 7:6; 8:2, 13; 15:13, 16), giving us a pattern of holiness to follow (8:4), guiding us in it (8:14), and purifying our consciences to bear true witness (9:1). The Holy Spirit pours God's love into our hearts (5:5; 15:30), along with joy, peace, and hope by His power (14:17; 15:13). He enables us to pray rightly (8:26) and to call God our Father, thereby giving inward spiritual assurance that we are God's children (8:16). We are to set our minds on the things of the Spirit if we wish to be pleasing to God (8:5–6). Though Paul discusses spiritual gifts briefly in Romans (12:3–8), he makes no explicit mention of the Holy Spirit in connection with these gifts, except to refer to them as “spiritual” (or “of the Spirit”) in 1:11. The present work of the Holy Spirit in us is only a foretaste of His future heavenly work in us (8:23).

**Introducing Romans**

**Background.** When Paul wrote Romans about A.D. 56, he had not yet been to Rome, but he had been preaching the gospel since his conversion in A.D. 35. During the previous ten years he had founded churches throughout the Mediterranean world. Now he was nearing the end of his third missionary journey. This epistle is therefore a mature statement of his understanding of the gospel. The church at Rome had been founded by other Christians (unknown to us, but see “visitors from Rome” in Acts 2:10); and Paul, through his travels, knew many of the believers there (16:3–15).

**Occasion and Date.** Paul most likely wrote Romans while he was in Corinth in A.D. 56, taking a collection to help the needy Christians in Jerusalem (15:25–28, 31; 2 Corinthians 8–8). He planned to go to Jerusalem with this collection, then visit the church in Rome (1:10–11; 15:22–

24). After being refreshed and supported by the Christians in Rome, he planned to travel to Spain to preach the gospel (15:24). He wrote to tell the Romans of his impending visit. The letter was likely delivered by Phoebe (16:1–2).

**Purpose.** In view of his personal plans, Paul wrote to introduce himself to a church he had never visited. At the same time he set forth a full and orderly statement of the great principles of the gospel that he preached.

**Characteristics.** Romans is commonly considered the greatest exposition of Christian doctrine anywhere in Scripture. It contains an orderly, logical development of profound theological truths. It is filled with the great themes of redemption: the guilt of all mankind, our inability to earn favor with God, the redeeming death of Christ, and the free gift of salvation to be received by faith alone. Since Paul had not visited Rome, the epistle does not address specific local problems, but contains general teaching applicable to all Christians for all time. Throughout the history of the church, expositions of Romans have sparked many revivals as people have become aware of the magnificence of God and His grace toward us.

**Content.** The overall doctrinal theme that Paul seeks to demonstrate is that God is righteous. In spite of all that happens in this world—even though all people are sinful (1:18–3:20); even though God does not punish but forgives repentant sinners (3:21–5:21); even though believers may not fully live in a way consistent with God’s righteousness (6:1–8:17); even though believers suffer and final redemption is delayed (8:18–39); even though many Jews do not believe (9:1–11:36)—still God is perfectly righteous, and by His grace has forgiven us. Because of this great mercy from an all righteous God, we should live a pattern of life consistent with God’s own righteousness (12:1–16:27).

**Personal Application.** Romans teaches us that we should not trust in ourselves for salvation, but in Christ (chs. 1–5); that we should imitate the faith of Abraham (ch. 4); be patient in times of trouble (5:1–21); rejoice in our representation by Christ (5:12–21); grow in daily death to sin (6:1–7:25); walk according to the Spirit each moment (8:1–17); hope in future glory and trust that God will bring good out of present sufferings (8:18–39); pray for and proclaim the gospel to the lost, especially the Jews (9:1–11:32); and praise God for His great wisdom in the plan of salvation (11:33–36). Especially in chapters 12–15 the letter gives many specific applications to life, showing how the gospel works out in practice both in the church and in the world. Finally, we can even learn to imitate Paul’s deeply personal care for many individual believers (ch. 1<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Hayford, J. W., Thomas Nelson Publishers. (1995). [Hayford's Bible handbook](#). Nashville, TN; Atlanta, GA; London; Vancouver: Thomas Nelson Publishers.