

Romans Introduction

I. Author: Paul (Rom. 1:1)

A. Internal Evidence:

The opening verse claims Pauline authorship (1:1)

Vocabulary and theological discourse is similar to earlier Pauline epistles (Galatians, 1, 2 Corinthians).

The writing style and logic is Paul's style.

The author is familiar with Priscilla and Aquila as was Paul (Rom 16:3 cf., Acts 18:2-3).

The author mentions a collection for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem, an endeavor Paul was involved in (Rom. 15:25-27; cf., Acts 19:21; 20:1-5; 21:15, 17-19, 1 Corinthians 16:1-5, and 2 Corinthians 8:1-12; 9:1-5)

The author claims descent from the tribe of Benjamin, as was Paul (Romans 11:1; Philippians 3:5)

The author plans to visit Rome as did the apostle Paul (Rom. 1:10-13, 15:32; cf., Acts 19:21)

B. External Evidence

Apostolic Fathers attest Pauline authorship (Clement of Rome, Ignatius, Polycarp)

Second century attestation by Irenaeus, Justin Martyr, Hippolytus.

Romans is attributed to Paul in every early church list of accepted writings, including the *Muratorian* Fragment (*ca.*, A.D. 170)

C. Tertius, the Amanuensis

The one interesting issue though is the role of Tertius, who claims to have written the epistle in Rom. 16:22. Tertius was Paul's amanuensis who either took down the epistle in longhand as Paul dictated it or he took it down in shorthand, wrote out the letter and then submitted it to Paul for corrections and final edits. Since the final product was certified by Paul, the use of an amanuensis does no damage to the God breathing out (2 Tm. 3:16-17) the final product guaranteeing that it is free from error. In my view, it would seem that a missive such as Romans with an

extremely tight logical structure must either have been dictated completely by Paul or he maintained strict editorial control over the final product.

D. Conclusion

Though an attempt was made by a few liberal European scholars in the late 19th century to dispute Pauline authorship, their arguments were rejected. Today, Pauline authorship is accepted virtually without question.

II. Date: Winter A.D. 56-57

During his third missionary journey Paul wrote three epistles, 1, 2 Corinthians and Romans. The two Corinthian epistles were penned first, after Paul reached Macedonia from Ephesus. When he arrived in Corinth, sometime at the end of 56 or winter of 57, he wrote to the church in Rome. It was during this third missionary journey that he continuously made collections for the saints in Jerusalem (Rom 15:25-28, cf., Acts 24:17). His intent was to travel to Jerusalem to celebrate Pentecost, and then on to Rome. Paul spent Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread in Phillipi so he wrote Romans prior to that. Nero was the emperor at that time.

The church in Rome was not founded by Paul, neither was it founded by Peter. No evidence exists concerning who founded that church. The most likely theory is that wither some of the Jews who were in Jerusalem at Pentecost, or perhaps some from the other areas where Paul had been (Asia, Macedonia, Greece), had believed Jesus was the promised Messiah and returned to Rome with the gospel. Internal evidence indicates Gentiles. The church was composed of both Gentiles (1:13; 11:13; 11:28-31; 15:15-16), and Jews (2:17-3:8; 3:21-4:1; 7:1-14; 14:1-15:12).

Paul wrote Romans from Corinth where he was staying with Gaius of Corinth (16:23; cf. 1 Cor. 1:14). In Romans 16:23 he also mentioned "Erastus, the treasurer of the city" (16:23). A first-century inscription in Corinth mentions Erastus: "Erastus, the commissioner of public works, laid this pavement at his own expense."

III. Historical Background

- A. Rome was founded in 753 B.C.
- B. Rome's history can be divided into three periods

Rome as founded *ca.* 753 B.C. with two settlements on the Palatine Hill and the Quirinal. Tradition attributes the founding to Aeneas who escaped the destruction of Troy, by fleeing to the Italian peninsula. His descendants were believed to have been twin sons, Romulus and Remus, who became the legendary founders of Rome. Romulus murdered Remus. The traditional date marking his sole rule is April 21, 753 B.C.

- 1. Pre-Republic Period of the Monarchy, 753-510 B.C.

2. The Republic Period, 510 B.C.-27 B.C.

During this time the city expanded beyond its walls, conquered the neighboring Etruscans and Greeks on the peninsula, then expanded into North Africa-making treaties with the Egyptians, conquering the Carthaginians, and expanding west into Spain and east in the Middle East.

As Rome expanded its wealth increased, prosperity ensued along with the problems of urban growth. With increased wealth came both the good and the evil—vice, violent entertainment in the coliseum, brilliant architectural and engineering accomplishments; military conquests, the expansion of a network of highways that led to a unification within the empire.

Under the *Pax Romana*, the gospel would benefit through expansion in an empire where there was at first, no fear of opposition or persecution.

The Republic ended in a series of civil wars and attempts to seize power by various generals.

3. The Empire, 27 B.C— A.D. 476/1453

With the consolidation of power under Octavian, the Senate bestowed on him the title of Augustus and the period of the Empire began. The emperors of the 1st century A.D. cover the period of the life of Jesus and of the new church. Several emperors are mentioned in the NT—Augustus (Lk 2:1), Tiberius (Lk 3:1), Claudius (Acts 11:28; 18:2), and Nero (Acts 25:10–12; 27:24; 2 Tm 4:16, 17).

By the mid-first century A.D. Rome was the largest city in the world with a population exceeding one million inhabitants. A visitor would be overwhelmed with the magnificent architecture, the opulence on the one hand and squalor on the other.

The church in Rome included both slaves and free. The number was quite large and they would have met in several different locations. The historian, Tacitus, describes the number of Christians persecuted under Nero to be “an immense multitude.”

IV. The Occasion;

Paul gives four clues for understanding his situation at the time he penned *Romans* (15:23–33)

1. The only time that fits his description in ch. 15 is his winter stay in Corinth at the end of the third missionary journey (Acts 20:2–3; cf. 2 Cor. 13:1).
2. Paul is aware that he has reached a transition period in his ministry.

3. Paul expresses his concern about his impending trip to Jerusalem and the issue of the relation between Jews and Gentiles in the body of Christ.

4. Paul is seeking the support of the Roman Christians for his new ministry in Spain.

V. Literary Genre

The importance of identifying literary genre is overdone in modern theology. It is important to understand the broad genre distinctives for hermeneutics, i.e., poetry, narrative, law, history, prophecy, but not micro differences. New Testament epistles are letters, but, unique letters. Modern scholar's swallow camels and strain gnats to get at the precise genre.

VI. Key Terms and Doctrines

Faith

Works of the Law, Works

Sin

Justification

Righteousness

Saved

Redemption

Propitiation

Wrath

Gospel

Key Doctrines: sin, justification by faith alone, redemption, reconciliation, sanctification, the role of the HS in the believers life, the future for Israel, government, civil disobedience, spiritual gifts.

δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ, as used in Romans. It occurs at key junctures in the book: 1:17; 3:5; 3:21, 22; and 10:3. In addition, we see 'his righteousness' (δικαιοσύνη αὐτοῦ) referring to God's righteousness in 3:25 and 26

VII. Working Outline

I. Introduction: God's righteousness is revealed and is acquired by faith (1:1-17).

A. Salutation (1:1-7)

B. Thanksgiving and Longing (1:8-15)

1. Paul's Prayer of Thanks for the Romans (1:8-10)

2. Paul's Desire to Visit the Romans (1:11-15)

C. The Theme of the Epistle (1:16-17)

II. Justification: God's righteousness revealed in condemnation and justification by faith alone in Christ alone (1:18-5:11).

A. Condemnation: God's standard of perfect righteousness is violated by all mankind which demonstrates the universal need for God's righteousness (1:18-3:20).

1. God's condemnation of man's unrighteousness is the result of man's rejection of God (1:18-32).

2. God's condemnation of the self-reliant moralist is based on principles of divine standards and not on the relative standards of the human moralist (2:1-16).

3. God's condemnation of the Jew is based on the Jewish trust in the attempt to acquire righteousness through rigorous observance of religious laws than on an inner transformation originating from God (2:17-3:8)

4. God condemns the whole world because all are under sin (3:9-20).

B. Justification: God graciously provides righteousness to all who believe in Jesus Christ (3:21-5:11).

1. God manifested His righteousness in the Law and the Prophets and has made His righteousness available to anyone who believes in Jesus Christ (3:21-31).

2. God illustrated the reality of imputed righteousness in the faith of Abraham (4:1-25).

a. Abraham Justified by Faith, not Works (4:1-8)

b. Abraham Justified by Faith, not Circumcision (4:9-12)

c. Abraham's Seed Justified by Faith, not Law (4:13-17)

d. Abraham Justified by Faith in the Promise (4:18-25)

3. God's justification leads to the hope of final salvation (5:1-11)
 - a. Present: Peace with God (5:1-5)
 - b. Past: Powerlessness of Sinners (5:6-8)
 - c. Future: Escape from God's Wrath (5:9-11)
 - d. The Reign of Grace Vs. the Reign of Sin (5:12-21)

III. Sanctification: God produces righteousness in those who have been declared righteous and continue a walk by faith (6:1–8:39).

A. The Rationale for Sanctification: God identifies the believer with Christ's death so that he is now dead to sin but alive to God through Christ (6:1-23).

1. Union with Christ (6:1-14)
2. Enslavement to Righteousness (6:15-23)

B. God does not enable the believer to be sanctified by the Law, the justified one is free from the Law and its domination (7:1-25).

1. The Believer's Relationship to the Law (7:1-6)
2. The Law is Good but Sterile (7:7-13)
3. The Flesh is Bad and Powerless (7:14-25)

C. God provides every believer with His Holy Spirit who alone has the power to sanctify (8:1-17)

1. Over Sin (8:1-8)
2. Over Death (8:9-11)
3. Over Slavery (8:12-17)

D. The Goal of Sanctification (8:18-39)

1. Present Sufferings (8:18-27)
2. Future Glory (8:28-30)
3. Hymn of Assurance (8:31-39)

IV. God will vindicate His righteousness in His relationship to Israel (9:1–11:36)

- A. God's Past Dealings with Israel (9:1-33)
 - 1. Preface: Paul's Deep Sorrow because of Israel's Great Privileges (9:1-5)
 - 2. The Grace of God's Election (9:6-29)
 - 3. The Nation's Rejection of the Messiah via Legalism (9:30-33)
- B. God's Present Dealings with Israel (10:1-21)
 - 1. Equality with the Gentiles (10:1-13)
 - 2. Obstinace of the Jews (10:14-21)
- C. God's Future Dealings with Israel (11:1-33)
 - 1. The Rejection is not Complete (11:1-10)
 - 2. The Rejection is not Final (11:11-32)
 - 3. Doxology: In Praise of God's Wisdom (11:33-36)

V. Application: God's righteousness should be displayed in the life of the justified believer (12:1–15:13).

- A. In the Assembly (12:1-21)
 - 1. The "set apart" Life (12:1-2)
 - 2. The Use of Spiritual Gifts (12:3-8)
 - 3. The Sincerity of Love (12:9-21)
- B. In the State (13:1-14)
 - 1. In Relation to Authorities (13:1-7)
 - 2. In Relation to Neighbors (13:8-10)
 - 3. Because of our Eschatological Hope (13:11-14)
- C. In Relation to Weak Believers (14:1–15:13)
 - 1. Judging and the Principle of Liberty (14:1-12)
 - 2. Stumbling Blocks and the Principle of Love (14:13-23)
 - 3. Selfishness and the Imitation of Christ (15:1-13)

VI. Conclusion: Paul's Purpose, Plans and Praise in Connection with the Dissemination of Righteousness (15:14–16:27)

A. Paul's Mission Explained (15:14-33)

1. His Reason for Writing (15:14-16)
2. His Work among the Gentiles (15:17-21)
3. His Plan to Visit Rome (15:22-33)

B. Final Greetings (16:1-27)