

Romans

Romans is placed first among Paul's 13 epistles in the New Testament. While the four Gospels present the words and works of Jesus Christ, Romans explores the significance of His sacrificial death. Using a question-and-answer format, Paul records the most systematic presentation of doctrine in the Bible. However, Romans is more than a book of theology; it is a book of practical exhortations. The good news of Jesus Christ is presented as a life to be lived, not just facts to be believed.

INTRODUCTION

Paul wrote Romans to reveal God's sovereign plan of Salvation (chapters 1-8), to show how Jews and Gentiles fit into that plan (chapters 9-11), and to exhort followers of Jesus to live righteous and harmonious lives (chapters 12-16). From the beginning Paul is clear, God offers the gift of His righteousness to everyone who comes to Christ by faith (Romans 1:16-17). In this complete presentation of God's plan of Salvation, Paul moves from condemnation to glorification, and from positional truth to practical truth. Keywords like *righteousness*, *faith*, *law*, *all*, and *sin* each appear at least 60 times in this epistle.

AUTHOR

All critical schools of thought agree on the Pauline authorship (Romans 1:1) of this foundational book. Paul dictated this letter to a secretary named Tertius (Romans 16:22), who was allowed to add his own greeting.

Although some manuscripts omit "in Rome" in chapter 1, verses 7 and 15, the title *Pros Romaious*, "To the Romans," has been associated with the epistle almost from the beginning.

DATE & SETTING

Paul did not found the church at Rome, and the tradition that Peter was its founder is contrary to the evidence. It is likely that followers of Jesus from churches established by Paul in Asia, Macedonia, and Greece settled in Rome and lead others to Christ. Gentiles were predominant in the church at Rome, but there were also Jewish believers.

Rome was founded in 753 B.C., and by the time of Paul it was the greatest city in the world with over one million inhabitants (one inscription says over four million). It was full of magnificent buildings, but the majority of people were slaves. The church in Rome was well known (Romans 1:8), and it had been established for several years by the time of this letter (Romans 14:14; 15:23). The followers of Jesus there were probably numerous, and evidently, they met in several places (Romans 16:1-16).

Paul wrote Romans in A.D. 57, near the end of his third missionary journey (Acts 18:23-21:14). It was evidently written during his three-month stay in Corinth, Greece (Acts 20:3-6). He gave this letter to Phoebe from the church at Cenchrea, near Corinth, and she carried it to Rome (Romans 16:1-2).