

Book of Romans

Title

This epistle's name comes from its original recipients: the members of the church in Rome, the capital of the Roman Empire (1:7).

Author - Date:

We know from (1:1), that the author of this epistle is Paul.

In addition, the author makes some personal references that are only applicable to Paul (compare 11:13; 15:15-20).

The case for Pauline authorship is conclusive and practically unquestioned both in the history of the church and in modern scholarship.

Background – Setting

Rome was the capital and most important city of the Roman Empire.

It was founded in 753 B.C., but is not mentioned in Scripture until New Testament times.

Rome is located along the banks of the Tiber River, about 15 miles from the Mediterranean Sea.

Until an artificial harbor was built at nearby Ostia, Rome's main harbor was Puteoli, some 150 miles away (see note on Acts 28:13).

In Paul's day, the city had a population of over one million people, many of whom were slaves.

Rome boasted magnificent buildings, such as the Emperor's palace, the Circus Maximus, and the Forum, but its beauty was marred by the slums in which so many lived.

According to tradition, Paul was martyred outside Rome on the Ostian Way during Nero's reign (A.D. 54-68).

Some of those converted on the Day of Pentecost probably founded the church as Rome (compare Acts 2:10).

Paul had long sought to visit the Roman church, but had been prevented from doing so (1:13).

In God's providence, Paul's inability to visit Rome gave the world this inspired masterpiece of gospel doctrine.

Paul's primary purpose in writing Romans was to teach the great truths of the gospel of grace to believers who had never received apostolic instruction.

The letter also introduced him to a church where he was personally unknown, but hoped to visit soon for several important reasons: to edify the believers (1:11); to preach the gospel (1:15); and to get to know the Roman Christians, so they could encourage him (1:12; 15:32), better pray for him (15:30), and help him with his planned ministry in Spain (15:28).

Unlike some of Paul's other epistles (e.g., 1 and 2 Corinthians and Galatians), his purpose for writing was not to correct aberrant theology or rebuke ungodly living.

The Roman church was doctrinally sound, but, like all churches, it was in need of the rich doctrinal and practical instruction this letter provides.

Historical – Theological themes:

Before we begin in the book of Romans we need to look at the penman, Paul.

Paul was also known as Saul.

Saul means asked and this was the name he was using when he was persecuting the Christians.

The name Paul means little.

His Jewish name was Saul and his Roman name was Paul.

I personally believe that Saul stopped using that name when he was saved by Jesus Christ, and used the name Paul from then on.

He was a native of Tarsus, a city of Cilicia.

Paul was Jewish (in fact a Pharisee).

He was from the tribe of Benjamin.

Philippians 3:5 "Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, [of] the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee;"

Paul was also a Roman citizen.

His father was a Roman.

Paul was such a controversial figure that I feel our time will be well spent considering his background.

Paul was an educated man.

He had studied in Jerusalem in a Jewish school under Gamaliel.

We will see in Paul's teachings some leftovers from that early learning of the law.

Remember Paul was a Roman citizen, from Tarsus, a Pharisee of the Hebrews.

This may explain what he says in Corinthians.

1 Corinthians 9:19-22 "For though I be free from all [men], yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more." "And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law;" "To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law." "To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all [men], that I might by all means save some."

This should make it easier for all of us to understand the seemingly discrepancies that were in Paul's writings.

He does not say the same thing all the time, because he is speaking to those people who have different customs.

Paul tries to reach them at their level of understanding at the time.

He establishes a church in Philippi with 2 women in high position and then writes the Corinthian church for women to be silent in church.

In this same 1 Corinthians, we read that women should have their head covered when they prophesy in the church.

1 Corinthians 11:5 "But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with [her] head uncovered dishonored her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaven."

1 Corinthians 11:15 "But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for [her] hair is given her for a covering."

Paul fights for the new Christian doctrine of not having to keep the old Mosaic law and then observes it himself.

The reason for this is not that he is doubleminded, but that as I said, he is keeping the customs of each person he ministers to.

Paul was not a hater of women as many thought, for he travelled with women ministers who worked with him.

When God sent him to Macedonia, he ministered to the women on the Sabbath and Lydia and her family were saved.

He moved into Lydia's house and established a church there.

Acts 16:12-15 "And from thence to Philippi, which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia, [and] a colony: and we were in that city abiding certain days." "And on the sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted [thither]." "And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard [us]: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul." "And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought [us], saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide [there]. And she constrained us."

It appears from this that Lydia was a leader of this church in her home.

Paul never married, but it was not because he hated women but because he was so busy working for God.

All of chapter 7 of first Corinthians is about this very thing.

Many of the people of our day have deified Paul and that is very dangerous.

It appears to me that this is very like what the Jews did about John the Baptist. John the Baptist was more acceptable to the Jews than Jesus was.

If we Christians are not careful we will forget also that Jesus Christ the Son of God is the focal point of the entire Bible, John the Baptist was a messenger (a truly great servant of God), but Jesus was the Message.

The messenger is not more important than the Message.

Paul was a servant of Jesus as we read in his own words in Romans 1.

Romans 1:1 "Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called [to be] an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God,"

The One served is greater than the servant.

Paul is not at fault in this, we Christians are.

We must worship God alone.

Paul's writings are important (some of my favorites).

We certainly do not want to down play them at all.

Tremendous teachings of the basic Christian walk are taught in the books he penned.

Gentiles owe much of their church beginnings to him and Peter.

Paul was a tentmaker by trade and even worked as a tentmaker while he ministered.

He tried to make his own way so that he was not subject to any particular church.

Philippians 4:12 "I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need."

Paul was satisfied with whatever he had.

He did not complain.

Paul was a very special man.

He went into the desert for 3 years after his encounter with Jesus and was taught of the Holy Spirit of God.

Galatians 1:16-18 "To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood:" "Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus." "Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days."

Paul was also carried away into heaven at one point.

2 Corinthians 12:1-5 "It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord." "I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such a one caught up to the third heaven." "And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;)" "How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter." "Of such a one will I glory: yet of myself I will not glory, but in mine infirmities."

Paul had been an arrogant man before he met Jesus, but he became humble to the point of calling himself chief among sinners.

1 Timothy 1:15 "This [is] a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief."

Jesus had called Paul to a life of suffering.

Acts 9:15-16 "But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel:" "For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake."

We see that Paul himself lists some of these sufferings in 2 Corinthians.

2 Corinthians 11:23-28 "Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I [am] more; in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft." "Of the Jews five times received I forty [stripes] save one." "Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep;" "[In] journeyings often, [in] perils of waters, [in] perils of robbers, [in] perils by [mine own] countrymen, [in] perils by the heathen, [in] perils in the city, [in] perils in the wilderness, [in] perils in the sea, [in] perils among false brethren;" "In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness." "Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches."

We also see in this verse above that his greatest suffering was for the churches he started.

Some of these churches were the church at Corinth, and the church at Ephesus, and also the church at Philippi.

Paul helped establish the doctrine for the Christians when he fought so hard the Jews and even went to Jerusalem to get the last word from Peter stating that believers in Christ were not to circumcise males and were not to keep the Mosaic law.

Chapter 15 of Acts tells of all they were to do in the way of a doctrine.

Acts 15:20 "But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and [from] fornication, and [from] things strangled, and [from] blood."

Paul's part in the founding of Christianity must be admired.

He went on 3 missionary journeys establishing churches.

He spent more time at Ephesus than any other of these places.

On one visit, he stayed two and one half years there.

Much of his writing was done from Rome where he was under house arrest for a lengthy time.

Paul was a full apostle of Christ.

Apostle means (one sent with a special message).

Paul certainly fell into that category.

He not only preached, but healed the sick as well.

Paul covered a great deal of the known world at that time also.

He fulfilled the commission that Jesus gave in Mark.

Mark 16:15 "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature."

Paul carried a company with him everywhere he went to preach.

Philippians 4:3 "And I intreat thee also, true yokefellow, help those women which labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and [with] other my fellow laborers, whose names [are] in the book of life."

We see also at Antioch, Paul and Barnabas were ordained for their missionary work together.

This can be found (in Acts in chapter 13 and 14).

John Mark ministered for a short time with Paul and Barnabas.

Luke (who wrote the books of Acts), went with Paul on these missionary journeys and even went to Rome with him.

Many times in Acts, Luke (who was the beloved physician), when he speaks of Paul's journeys, says "we".

Perhaps Paul was closer to Timothy than any of these others.

He loved Timothy so much that he speaks of him as a son.

2 Timothy 1:2 "To Timothy, [my] dearly beloved son: Grace, mercy, [and] peace, from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord."

This was not Paul's son in the flesh, but in the spirit.

Paul took Timothy as a youth and trained him for a minister of Jesus Christ.

We would go on and on, like Dorcas, who many believe helped Paul financially.

He was popular among the followers of Jesus.

Paul was sorry that he had consented to the stoning of Stephen.

He and Peter had a few differences which were settled quickly.

Paul worked diligently for the Lord Jesus Christ and His church after he received the Lord.

At the end Paul was able to say in 2 Timothy.

2 Timothy 4:7 "I have fought a good fight, I have finished [my] course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day."

We will finish the last of verse 8 out in saying O that I might be like Paul and receive this crown of righteousness.

2 Timothy 4:8 "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."