

## Romans

- 1. Who was the writer? What was his situation?** The apostle Paul was the writer as communicated in Romans 1:1. This letter was written around AD 57 or 58, probably from Corinth during Paul's third missionary journey -- cf. Acts 19:21, Acts 20:1-3, 2 Corinthians 12:14, Romans 15:18-28. Paul had completed his work in Macedonia and Achaia and had the desire to get to Rome and then to Spain. There is no Scriptural record that Paul ever made it to Spain, but some extra-Biblical sources indicate that he did get to preach there during the interim of his Roman imprisonments.
- 2. Who were the recipients? How were they connected to the author?** The recipients of this letter are disclosed in Romans 1:7. Paul wrote this letter to "all who are beloved of God in Rome, called as saints." The church of Rome was made up largely of those with Gentile background -- 1:5-6, 11:13. Although Paul had never been to Rome at the time of this writing (1:13), he clearly had intimate relationships with many of the brethren there as evidenced by the greetings of chapter 16. Because of the freedom of travel throughout the Roman Empire, it is not surprising that during Paul's many travels, he had met or converted many of those who were a part of the congregation at Rome.
- 3. What is the main theme of the book of Romans?** There is so much good stuff in Romans, it is difficult to summarize in one theme. There is tremendous emphasis upon the gospel, faith, righteousness, and unity within the body. However, if we have to choose one main theme, we will pick something that is mentioned at the beginning and end of the book. Both Romans 1:5 and 16:26 speak of "obedience of faith." Romans truly does relate how true faith in Christ produces the obedience that God has always desired from His people. There is no greater theme than this!
- 4. Does every person inherit Adam's sin?** One of the great theological fallacies of our time is the concept of "original sin." This is the mistaken idea that "in Adam's fall, we sinned all." Many use Romans chapter 5 to attempt to establish that all people inherit Adam's sin. However, the context of Romans 5 is the contrast of Adam and Jesus. Jesus' obedience and righteousness aren't inherited by everyone, but only by those who follow in His footsteps. In like manner, sin is attributed to a person when he follows the example left by Adam. Romans 5:12 is carefully worded by the Holy Spirit, "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, *because all sinned*." Every person is accountable for his own sin! Adam gets blamed for opening the door to sin; we get the blame for our own sin. This point is clearly explained in Ezekiel 18:20, "The person who sins will die. The son will not bear the punishment for the father's iniquity, nor will the father bear the punishment for the son's iniquity..." The idea of "original sin" is actually a veiled attempt to justify personal sin and place the blame elsewhere. Our righteous and just God only holds people accountable for their own sins. Let's leave behind the heritage of Adam, and let's follow in the steps of our older brother Christ!

**5. How does the book of Romans contrast life and death?** The book of Romans has much to say about both life and death. However, the times that they are directly contrasted are two.

- "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." -- Romans 6:23
- "For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace." -- Romans 8:6

**6. Is a Christian destined to forever be the wretched man spoken of in chapter 7?**

Many claim that Romans 7:14-25 speaks of the never-ending losing battle of the sinful Christian. However, the context of Romans 7 communicates that this is the hopeless situation of a person under the Law. The Law is a ministry of condemnation and death, while the New Testament is a ministry of freedom and life. Let's view the contrast within chapters 6-8 of the new creature and the slave to sin.

**Slave to Sin**

Of the flesh -- 7:14  
Sold into bondage to sin -- 7:14  
Prisoner of the law of sin -- 7:23  
In the body of this death -- 7:24

**New Creature**

Not in the flesh, but in the Spirit -- 8:9  
Free from sin -- 6:7,  
Free from the law of sin and death -- 8:2  
Body of sin done away with, life to mortal bodies -- 6:6, 8:11

It is clear that the Scripture is not speaking of the same person in these conflicting views. The slave to sin is a person who is under the Law (7:5), while the new creature has died to the law, and serves in newness of the Spirit (7:6). Praise God that "there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."

**7. Does God's foreknowledge conflict with man's free will?** Many who prescribe to the view of total predestination point to the book of Romans, particularly chapter 9, to uphold this concept. The idea of total predestination is that a person's salvation is completely dependent upon the providence of God, apart from the will of man. Romans 9:16 does say, "So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy." This verse cannot mean total predestination because the eleventh chapter of Romans makes it clear that we have a part to play in God's decisions. Romans 11:20 states, "Quite right, they were broken off for their unbelief, but you stand by your faith. Do not be conceited, but fear." The thrust of Romans chapters 9-11 is twofold. First of all, it communicates the mercy of God. None of us, by our works, is deserving to make it into heaven. It is only because of God's mercy that any of us will make it. Secondly, these chapters show that God's mercy is given in accordance with our faith, not due to our efforts, diligent though they may be. Romans 9:32 explains why Israel in general couldn't attain God's righteousness. It says, "Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as though it were by works." God certainly does have foreknowledge, but it doesn't take away man's choice. God's perfect plan is set up so that His blessings are extended to those who have faith in Christ, not to those who try to reach God by their own futile efforts.

- 8. The book of Romans makes it clear that a person is justified by faith. From where does that faith come?** A person can't just will themselves to have faith. True faith grows as it is built upon evidence, resulting in absolute conviction. (My example of polka dotted unicorn). Romans 10:17 states, "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ." Lack of faith comes because most people refuse to hear and heed the good news. Any person who goes through life with the motto that "ignorance is bliss" will receive the eternal penalty meted out to the unfaithful. The Scriptures consistently put responsibility upon the hearer, as Jesus often pointed out, "he who has ears to hear, let him hear." If we desire to build our faith, we must turn to the Scriptures and intently listen to the message.
- 9. How is the Christian to see himself?** Romans 6:11 is very clear in reference to the Christian's view of himself. It says, "Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus." The preceding verses of this chapter set forth that the old man dies with Christ in the waters of immersion, and that a new creature is raised to walk in newness of life. In reference to the resurrected, ascended Christ, Romans 6:10 says, "For the death that He died, He died to sin, once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God." In simple terms, the Christian is to see himself as already raised with Christ, and seated with Him in the heavenly places.