

## Romans

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### Romans – Introduction Part 3

#### Authorship

- Of all of Paul's letters, when it comes to the question of whether or not Paul *actually* was the writer of a given epistle, there is the least amount of such questions concerning Paul's authorship of Romans. FF Bruce dismissed any such questions as "erratic schools of thought".
- The real importance of Paul's authorship of Romans lies in his person. Only Paul, with his roots in both Roman and Jewish heritage, with his many years of Biblical study, with his status as the supreme Christian missionary and theologian of his time, could have written the book of Romans. To the Jews in the church, he could speak as one of the very best of them. To the Gentiles in the church, he could speak as one who was a Roman citizen and as one who was thoroughly emersed in Greek culture. No one but Paul could have written Romans.
- In Romans 15:22-29 Paul writes that he is sending the letter just before he departs for Jerusalem with the offering, he has collected from the European churches to help with the suffering of the church there. Given that we know from Acts that Paul was in Corinth just before departing for Jerusalem, we can say with certainty that Corinth was where the letter originated, sometime then around 58 AD.

#### Destination

- Acts 2:10 tells us there were visitors from Rome on the Day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came over the church and the church spilled out into the streets with the gospel, culminating in Peter's sermon. Perhaps some of the 3000 new believers that day took the gospel back to Rome and formed the church then and it grew over the years.
- As Paul is about to leave Corinth for Jerusalem his mind seems to have been on a variety of things. First, he knows he's walking into the lion's den in Jerusalem. And knowing the strength of faith of many in the Roman church (Chapter 16) he covets their prayers (Romans 15:30-31). Second, Paul is already planning his next steps after delivering the offering to Jerusalem. Asia Minor/Turkey marked the eastern edge of the Roman empire and the known *civilized* world. India and China were known to the Roman world and commerce between Rome and the east was active, but these were not considered part of the civilized world. But to the west,

Spain was not just the western edge of the empire, but the edge of the world. When Jonah was fleeing God, he hoped to make it to Tarshish, located on the west coast of Spain – the very end of the earth. In Paul's mind he is thinking that Jesus called us to the ends of the earth and that would be Spain. But Spain had one other enticement for Paul. Spain at that time was producing some of the finest leaders in the empire. The best poets, writers, philosophers, and mathematicians were coming out of Spain, including the great Seneca. These are the types of people he wants to reach in order to reach an empire. So he tells the Romans in 15:24, 28 that he will see them when he is on the way to Spain. At that point both Paul and the Romans are calculating 2-3 weeks to get to Jerusalem, another 2-3 weeks at most there, and then 3-4 more weeks sailing back to Rome. So everyone was expecting Paul to be in Rome in two and half to three months and preparations could begin to be made for Paul's visit as he traveled to Spain.

## Organization

- Chapters 1 – 8 deals with the question of “what does it really mean to be Christian”. Paul uses the word “righteous” to define what a true Christian is.
- Chapters 9 – 11 deals with the question of the Jews. Are they still God's “Chosen People” or has that changed with the crucifixion?
- Chapters 12 – 15 primarily deal with practical questions of how to live out the Christ-like life, the life of righteousness.
- Chapter 16 is a letter of introduction for Phoebe and a list of final personal greetings.

## What is Romans?

- Paul knew Jerusalem was a city full of people who wanted to kill him. It is as if in the book of Romans, Paul is writing his last will and testament. It is as complete of a library of Paul's theology as there could be. And it seems that is the reason Romans stands in scripture at the head of all the epistles. Different fragments of Romans have been found far and wide across the old empire, suggesting that once the Roman church realized what they had, they began copying it over and over and sharing it with all the churches. Thus Romans stands as the foundation for theology of the church, so that we can put into words who Jesus Christ is and therefore know how we are to follow Him.