

ROMANS

Introduction

Author. No question by the early church was ever raised about the Pauline authorship of this letter. It contains a number of historical references (15:23-29; 16:21) which find parallels in Paul's life. The doctrine of the book is quite typical of Paul as well.

Date. The date of the book was probably the early spring of A. D. 57 while Paul was still in Corinth on his third missionary journey before he returned to Jerusalem (Acts 20:3).

Occasion. Late on his third missionary journey, after leaving Ephesus (Acts 19), Paul travelled through Macedonia (Acts 20:1-2), and then settled for three months in "Greece" (Acts 20:2). Paul had spent 18 months at Corinth on his second journey and the first and second epistles to the Corinthians anticipate his soon arrival in the city. Thus, his three month stay recorded in Acts (20:2) was undoubtedly in Corinth. That Romans was written from Corinth at this time is suggested by the following indicators: 1) in Romans 16:1-2 Paul commends to the Roman church a lady named Phoebe (evidently the messenger of the epistle), who was *a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea*; a sister city to Corinth. 2) Paul sends greetings from *Gaius my host* in Romans 16:23. This seems likely to have been the same Gaius as is mentioned in 1 Corinthians 1:14, a citizen of Corinth. 3) Erastus, the city treasurer of Corinth (2 Timothy 4:20) greets the church at Rome (Romans 16:23).

Based upon Paul's statements in 15:24 . . . *I hope to visit you while passing through and to have you assist me on my journey there . . .*, it seems that one reason for his writing was to enlist support for his missionary journeys to the west, that as Antioch had supported him in his first endeavors, perhaps Rome would support him in the west. Another peripheral reason may have been to enlist the prayer support of the Romans as Paul anticipated opposition from the Jews in Jerusalem (15:31). Some have suggested that the anticipated potential for danger in Judea caused Paul to commit to writing his theology of justification as well.

However legitimate these purposes may be, they do seem to be peripheral to Paul's main point. Because of his emphasis upon Jew and Gentile throughout his epistle (1:13, 16; 2:9-10, 14; 3:9; 9:24, 30; 11:11-13, 25; 15:9-18) and particularly his appeal for unity and mutual acceptance between Jew and Gentile in chapters fourteen and fifteen, it may be that relationship between these two groups was more at the center of his thinking. The implication of the book seems to be that the way of salvation for both is identical; therefore, the common salvation which they enjoy is a basis for unity amongst other cultural differences. Harmony in the body is possible because of theological unity.

Message Statement. *The righteousness which comes from God is available to all men, Jew and Gentile, on the basis of faith rather than works.*

Argument

- 1A INTRODUCTION 1:1-16a
Paul immediately introduces the universal nature of the Gospel in his opening words. He notes that the good news of the gospel is rooted in the promises given to the Jewish nation (1:2-3) but that the application of the gospel is intended for all nations (1:5). After declaring his desire to visit Rome Paul emphasizes the universal application of his gospel, to Greeks and non-Greeks (1:14).
- 1B STATEMENT OF THE THEME, THE GOSPEL: THE RIGHTEOUSNESS FROM GOD FOR ALL PEOPLE AVAILABLE BY FAITH 1:16-17
The essence of the epistle is stated in these two verses. First Paul declares that the message of salvation is intended for both Jews and Gentiles. He then elaborates on the means for securing this righteousness from God, namely, faith.
- 1C THE EXPLANATION OF THE RIGHTEOUSNESS FROM GOD WHICH COMES BY FAITH 1:18--4:25
The message of this section concerns the necessity and the means of attaining the righteousness of God. Although Paul eventually covers the place of faith in the life of the believer, his concern at this point is the initial stage of the process, justification.
- 1B The Impossibility of Becoming Righteous Without Faith 1:18--3:20
Before discussing the means of becoming righteous by faith, Paul first clarifies the point that no other way exists of becoming righteous. No person, whether Gentile or Jew has ever been pleasing to God apart from faith. This provides the foundation for his discourse upon the priority of faith in justification. Paul begins his argumentation with the general case of all men. He then becomes more specific by covering the specific case of the Jewish people and then closes his argumentation with scriptural proof of the predicament of man apart from faith.
- 1C The general case: All men are without excuse 1:18-32
Paul does not specify any nation in particular in this section. His point is to prove that all men everywhere have turned away from God rather than toward Him. All men have had the benefit of natural revelation but their universal testimony is that they have responded to that revelation improperly. Left to their natural devices all men sink lower and lower into the morass of sin even with the benefit of God's common grace. Although God may allow men to experience the fruit of their wickedness they continually turn from him until they are deserving only of death (1:32).
- 2C The specific case: The Jewish man is also without excuse 2:1--3:8
The natural tendency is probably to misunderstand the implications of the first section, namely, that all are sinners, so Paul becomes more specific. Not only is the average man without hope apart from faith, but so also are the privileged people of God. Israel, with all her advantages, is also in desperate need of God's righteousness which is available only through faith.
- 1D His guilt is clear 2:1-16
Although some have contended that this section concerns an intermediate group of the "moralist" Paul appears to recognize only two basic categories of people in this epistle, Jew and Gentile. The same category is mentioned in this section (2:9, 10, 14) so that it seems best to understand Paul's reference here to the self-righteous Jewish man. Paul's basic point is that fulfillment of the Law rather than possession of the Law gains favor with God. Paul is not suggesting that one may "do" the Law in his own strength (a discussion reserved for later in the book); rather, that the one who is truly regenerate will evidence an obedience for the law which elicits God's favor. Whether Jew or Gentile, the only thing which counts is an actual heartfelt "doing" of the Law. Apart from this even the Jewish man is guilty.
- 2D His privileges will not save 2:17-29
All of the privileges which the Jewish man enjoys which are defined by the covenant relationship to God (2:17) do not automatically qualify him for salvation. The significant symbol of circumcision in particular is patently useless unless it is accompanied by the inward reality of regeneration (2:29).
- 3D Brief excursus: His God is not, therefore, unworthy 3:1-8

Paul pauses in his argument for a moment to answer the question of God's faithfulness. Israel's present rejection does not imply that God's promises to the nation were empty. Paul communicates here little more than to say that God is not unjust or unfaithful. He reserves his defense of God in relation to Israel for later chapters (9-11).

- 3C The scriptural proof 3:9-20
 Up to this point Paul has given a social overview of humanity and found them wanting. Now he summarizes and climaxes his argument with proof of the hopelessness of man apart from faith with a catena of scripture references. Paul's point is that all are under God's condemnation and without hope. The only advantage which the Jewish man has by virtue of his knowledge of the Law is that he is more conscious of his sin than the Gentile is (3:20). With this final argument Paul has demonstrated a universal need of the righteousness from God.
- 2B God's Provision for Becoming Righteous by Faith 3:21-26
 In a succinct six verses Paul describes the essence of God's provision for attaining righteousness: faith in the atoning work of Christ. Paul does not contrast the righteousness of the cross with the righteousness of the Law; rather, his point is that the righteousness which comes from the combination of a natural man who is exposed to the Law can only be a false kind of self-righteousness. Apart from that another means of righteousness is available by faith in the atonement of Christ. It must be stressed, however, that this contrast between Law righteousness and cross righteousness is not a temporal one. That is, the cross did not present man with an alternate means of salvation. Rather the contrast between the Law and the cross in this context is a contrast between a means of righteousness apart from faith and a means of righteousness which includes faith. Note Paul's stress upon the place of faith in this (22:2, 25, 26).
- 3B An Implication Of Becoming Righteous by Faith: No Boasting 3:27-31
 Because faith is not a work the one who attains righteousness by faith has nothing to boast in. Paul sees this, the only means of attaining the righteousness from God, as a common denominator between Jew and Gentile. Although the interpretation of 3:31 is not settled, Paul seems to be upholding the place of the Law, still allowing for differences between Jew and Gentile.
- 4B An Illustration of becoming Righteous by Faith 4:1-25
 In order to clarify that he is not discussing temporal differences between the dispensation of law and that of grace Paul draws an illustration of the principle of righteousness by faith from one who predates the law, Abraham.
- 1C Relationship of works and faith 4:1-8
 Paul bases his argument on the clear teaching of the Pentateuch. That Abraham's faith was the means of his righteousness from God is clearly stated in Genesis 15:6. Thus, even Abraham, being justified by faith, had no cause for boasting of self righteousness.
- 2C Relationship of Abraham's circumcision and faith 4:9-12
 Paul's point of the application of the gospel to Gentiles is strengthened by the timing of Abraham's reception of righteousness. Because he was justified before his circumcision he serves as an example of the Gentile who believes but is not circumcised. Giving equal weight to the Jewish audience, Paul is also quick to note that Abraham is also *the father of the circumcised who not only are circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised* (4:12).
- 3C Relationship of law and faith 4:13-15
 Abraham's salvation before the law proves that the law has no primary role in salvation. The law only exposes one's sin.
- 4C Relationship of Gentiles to faith 4:16-25
 Paul climaxes his argument with Abraham and his faith by pointing out the implications for Gentiles. Abraham's example is one into which any race may enter with the sole criterion of faith. God's promise to Abraham was expanded so that he might be the father of many nations (4:18). Paul closes the section with the admonition that the written account of Abraham's example which is universal to Jew and Gentile is directly applicable to the reader (4:24). Thus, the encompassing nature of salvation by faith has definite implications for Paul's readership.
- 1D EXPLANATION OF THE LIFE OF THOSE WHO HAVE RECEIVED RIGHTEOUSNESS FROM GOD BY FAITH 5:1--8:39

Paul moves on from the point of salvation in the previous section now to sanctification. The righteousness which comes to men from God by faith is only begun at salvation. Its implications for the rest of the believer's life are manifold.

- 1B The Believer Has Peace with God 5:1-21
The first result of justification which Paul discusses is the believer's positive relationship with God. Not only has the believer escaped condemnation from the judge, but he now also has a restored relationship with him.
- 1C The statement 5:1-11
Having been the recipients of God's grace while an enemy of God, the believer's certainty of God's grace is now even greater. The hope of receiving a nature like God's is a grand cause for rejoicing (5:3).
- 2C The explanation: peace is possible because Christ's solution is greater than Adam's failure 5:12-21
The reason for this peace with God is found in a comparison between the cross and the garden. Although Adam's sin plunged the race into death, Jesus' work on the cross not only answered the failure but provided more grace. As a result the believer not only will attain Adam's lost estate but will, even better, some day attain a glorified state wherein he is incapable of sin.
- 2B The Believer has potential victory over sin 6:1-23
Paul now builds upon the foundation for sanctification which he has laid in chapter five. Because of the atoning work of Christ the believer has power to overcome sin. Once again, the work of Christ is viewed here as the basis for sanctification, not the temporal beginning of the process. To assume that Abraham could not have been used as an example of this sanctification could not be determined from the text.
- 1C The statement: Union with Christ means that sanctification is possible 6:1-14
Through the believer's salvation he has become united with Christ. This relationship, entered into at salvation, is the basis for power in daily living. Just as Christ was buried and raised to a new heavenly life, so also the believer, in a manner, died, and has been raised to newness of life.
- 2C The clarification: Does a position of favor mean sin does not matter? 6:15-23
Although some might interpret this new freedom as license, Paul is quick to point out that freedom means power to say *no* to sin. For the believer to return to his experience of sin before salvation would be to enslave himself once again, and to experience the fruit of that sin which is death.
- 3B The Believer Has Potential Freedom from Condemnation by the Law 7:1-25
To the degree that the believer has victory over sin he is therefore delivered from the condemnation which the law pronounces upon sinners. Paul's release from condemnation in this chapter seems to be relative. His experience is one of potential rather than complete release.
- 1C The principle of being free from the condemnation of the law 7:1-6
In Paul's analogy a death severs the responsibility to a commitment. In his application of the analogy, the death involves the death/salvation of the believer as he described it in the previous chapter. Thus, the event which makes the difference in chapter seven is not the change of dispensations which occurred at the cross, but the salvation experience of the believer.
- 2C Paul's personal relation to the law 7:7-25
Paul's own testimony serves as the point of departure for this discussion. Because of the changes in attitude and verb tenses it appears that he discusses his experience before and after salvation. This follows well from the introduction to this section, not only of the first six verses of chapter seven but also chapters five and six which lay the foundation.
- 1D Before salvation 7:7-14
Paul's inability to fulfill the genuine requirements of the law before salvation is best illustrated in his relation to the tenth commandment which involves coveting. Because it was a command which involved the heart Paul found it impossible to counterfeit with outward acts of piety. Although the commandment was not sinful, sin used the command as a base of operations to stir up his sinful desires and thus condemn him.
- 2D After salvation 7:15-25
Because Paul's testimony in this section involves both the present verb tense (7:14) and a

heart which is desirous to obey the law of God (an attitude totally uncharacteristic of the natural man according to the theology of this book, cf. 3:9-20), it probably refers to his experience after salvation. Paul's discovery is that the life of the believer only offers potential victory over sin. Salvation is a necessary requisite of victory but not the guarantee. As the life is begun by faith, it can only continue by faith. The means for both justification and sanctification is a humble dependence upon God. Paul freely acknowledges that he is the source of failure (7:24) and that freedom from the condemnation of the sinner only comes through Jesus Christ (7:25).

- 4B The Believer Has Potential Victory Over Sin by the Power of the Holy Spirit 8:1-30
The basis of power over sin is, of course, the Holy Spirit of God. At the point of salvation each believer has access to a resource heretofore unavailable to him. It is important not to presume that the *revelation* of this ministry is necessarily related to its *inception*.
- 1C A description of the indwelling Spirit: Victory 8:1-11
The power of the Spirit is clearly the means of victory in the believer's life. By that power he is enabled to truly fulfill the requirements of the law.
- 2C A result of the indwelling Spirit: Sonship 8:12-16
In addition to becoming friends with God at salvation, the believer also becomes one of God's sons. He therefore can approach God with confidence rather than fear.
- 3C The hope of the indwelling Spirit: Glorification 8:17-30
The ultimate hope of the indwelling Spirit is total sanctification. The believer's present experience of the indwelling Spirit is a mere foretaste of future glorification.
- 5B Conclusion: The Believer Has security in God 8:31-39
As a climax to this section and quite possibly the epistle thus far Paul delineates the security which the believer now has in God. All of the blessings which God has already bestowed upon the believer simply serve as tangible evidences of his love and even greater future blessing. That nothing can ever separate God from his children is further proof that the relationship which they enjoy is one based upon divine grace which can not fail rather than human effort which so often fails.
- 1E A DEFENSE OF THE GOSPEL IN THE CASE OF ISRAEL 9:1--11:36
With Paul's crescendo of praise to God because of the believer's security, questions may have been raised concerning God's faithfulness to Israel. If the present relationship of the nation to God is any indication of His ability to sustain his people then it would appear that His promises had failed. And if His word had failed with Israel (9:6) then the believer would have little hope as well.
- In addition, if the gospel is universal in its application then one might also wonder what the place of Israel was in God's plan. This section seems to answer both of those concerns. God's word had not failed and his people, Israel, still had a certain place in God's plan.
- 1B Introduction 9:1-5
Paul introduces the plight of the nation in this section. Because their advantages were manifold, their failure is all the greater.
- 2B God's Word of Promise Is Not Given to All 9:6-29
First of all, God's word of promise to the nation did not fail because the promises were not given to every descendant of Abraham. In every generation a special selection of God's own choosing has taken place. Isaac was chosen over Ishmael. Jacob was chosen over Esau. Ishmael's and Esau's failure to inherit the promises of God do not mean that God's promises therefore failed. God's promises are given in mercy (9:14-18) and grace (9:19-24), but not to every person. The truth of the matter is that God's promises will be fully inherited by a future generation of Israelites (9:25-26) although that generation will be a mere remnant of all of Abraham's physical descendants (9:27-29). Thus, the fact that many of Israel did not believe and therefore did not inherit the promises does not impugn the character of God.
- 3B God's Word of Promise Was Not Attained By Israel Because of Her Lack of Faith 9:30--10:21
This section becomes more specific, laying the blame for Israel's failure squarely at her feet. Any failure to attain the promises, must be traced to the stubborn refusal to believe on the part of knowledgeable individuals.

- 1C The summary statement 9:30-33
 In harmony with his recurring theme Paul states the irony that now Gentiles have attained the righteousness from God while much of Israel has not, simply because Gentiles have sought it by faith. Israel's inexcusable attempt to attain it by works has left her empty.
- 2C The place of faith 10:1-13
 In order to determine culpability on the part of Israel Paul must establish that she first had knowledge of the requirement of faith. He does so by quoting the book of Deuteronomy and its appeal to faith. Further, at the end of the book of Deuteronomy, as Moses makes a formal call for an oath of fidelity, he emphasizes the necessity and simplicity of a response of faith (30:13, 14). Paul quotes Moses (10:6-8), implying that goal of the law as it is described in Deuteronomy has always been a response of love for, and faith in, God. Israel should have been conscious of this fact. It follows then that since Christ is the goal of the law, if Israel had approached the law from the standpoint of faith they would have joyfully accepted the one who fulfilled the law (10:4). The principle of faith was as *simple* as Israel's failure was *self evident*.
- 3C Israel's conscious rejection of faith 10:14-21
 Israel had many messengers calling her to the righteousness of God but few believed. They heeded neither special nor general revelation so that their failure to believe must be considered as a refusal to believe. Moses predicted this response (10:19) and Isaiah recorded it (10:20-21).
- 4B God's Word of Promise Will Be Received by Israel When They Believe 11:1-32
 In a final word declaring the unfailing nature of God's word and the place of Israel in God's program, Paul discusses the nation's acceptance by God, both present and future. The present acceptance occurs on an individual basis while the future acceptance will include the nation as a whole.
- 1C Israel's rejection is not total: individuals are still saved 11:1-10
 As in the days of Elijah, even today, God has spared a remnant. Paul himself is an example of how God is still receiving individual Israelites. Thus the word of God has not failed.
- 2C Israel's rejection is not permanent: in the future she will be saved 11:11-32
 Israel's rejection will come to an end in the future. One generation will believe and the promises of the covenant will be fulfilled (10:26-27). Paul's final words in this section reconfirm the faithfulness of God's word of promise with the words *for God's gifts and his call are irrevocable* (11:29).
- 5B Conclusion 11:33-36
 Because God has, in his omniscient plan, used the failure of men to rebound to His glory and their good, Paul offers an encomium of praise to Him. Thus, God's plan of giving to men His righteousness by faith, though rejected temporarily by Israel, is now freely offered to Jew and Gentile alike.
- 1F IMPLICATIONS OF THE GOSPEL 12:1--15:13
 Although seemingly finished with his theological discourse Paul is by no means finished with the implications. The theology of righteousness which is available for all implies that all should live righteously. Some of those areas more pertinent to Paul's concerns are now covered.
- 1B The Summary 12:1-2
 The result of appreciating God's goodness should be total dedication. As the whole burnt offering of Leviticus, Paul urges the believer to offer his own life in gratitude to God. The means of the offering is found in living a transformed life which is unlike the thinking of the world. Such a life will express itself in the following ways.
- 2B Within the Body of Christ 12:3-13
 Paul's first concern involves the body of Christ. As in his epistle to the Galatians he was concerned that the believer *do good to all men but especially those of the household of faith* (Galatians 6:10). One can express gratitude for God's gifts by employing those gifts to serve others within the body.
- 3B Outside the Body of Christ 12:14-21
 The commands in this section seem to apply to the relationship of the believer to those outside the body of Christ. Proper responses to persecution and admonitions of vengeance suggest interaction with the world.
- 4B In Relation to Government 13:1-7
 Although the believer is now a citizen of another land Paul is concerned that he understand the theology of

authority. God has established, and is at the top of, every governmental structure.

- 5B In Relation to All 13:8-14
This section seems general in its application and appears to be a summary before Paul introduces the next section. The exhortations to love and purity resemble the general counsel of the introduction (12:1-2).
- 6B In Relation to Jewish/Gentile Differences 14:1--15:13
Because of the concerns of chapter fourteen and the explicit quotations of chapter fifteen this section probably refers to the relationships between Jewish and Gentile believers. Although Jew and Gentile share a common bond in salvation, the distinctive and exclusive nature of Judaism made interaction between the two groups difficult if not impossible. Rather than pronouncing an end to Jewish food laws and festival observances Paul stresses here a spirit of tolerance for individual practice. Paul's appeal is for unity *in spite* of differences rather than a *dissolution* of differences.
- The particular background of Paul's words is unclear. It might be that the weaker brothers were those Jews who felt bound by a Mosaic law which was no longer dispensationally valid. However, he might also have been addressing a situation where Jewish believer correctly continued to observe Moses while some Gentiles felt as though they also ought to join in. The weaker ones may actually have been Gentiles who did not fully understand their place in the present economy. Thus, for example, Paul's admonitions such as *I am fully convinced that no food is unclean in itself* (14:14) may have been intended for the Gentile who was concerned about foods, while at the same time upholding the Mosaic law for the Jewish reader.
- 1C The directions 14:1-21
Paul's directions for the Church are both negative and positive. He first urges them to stop passing judgment on what he considers disputable matters. He then urges positively that each one strive to edify others. Paul's final counsel is that each one follow his own conscience in the matter (14:23).
- 2C The reasons 15:1-13
Paul's bases for this deferential treatment of one another is threefold. First, he cites the example of Christ who put the needs of others ahead of himself. Second, he cites the ultimate goal of unity among the church (15:5-6) and finally he emphatically cites the legitimate place of the Gentiles in God's program through a series of quotations from David, Moses and Isaiah. Clearly God designed a place for Gentiles as Gentiles in his program. This fact should promote acceptance *by* the Jewish portion *of* the Gentile portion.
- 1G PAUL'S FINAL WORDS 15:14--16:27
As he did so often in the body of the epistle, in the closing portions Paul reiterates his mission to the Gentiles. The place of Gentiles in the body and his goal of placing more there are addressed once again.
- 1B Paul's Purpose in Life and Writing 15:14-22
Paul states that he has written *boldly on some points . . . because of the grace God gave me to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles* (15:15-16). Thus, it seems in the thinking of Paul (and whose evaluates the situation better?) that Paul's boldest points of theology concern his mission to the Gentiles. The most likely reference to this statement would be the immediately preceding section (14-15). Evidently the counsel concerning peaceful coexistence was one which some would consider unusual.
- 2B Paul's Plans to Visit Rome 15:23-33
Even in his plans to visit Rome Paul's concern is that the church there would support his efforts to further evangelize Gentiles (15:24). He also explains here his plans to visit Jerusalem and his apprehension concerning unbelievers in Judea (15:31). As history confirms, his concern was well founded (Acts 21 *et al.*).
- 3B Paul's Personal Greetings to the Romans 16:1-16
An extensive list of people in Rome evidences quite a familiarity of Paul with the recipients of the letter. As with Colossae, although Paul had never personally visited the city he was evidently still building upon his own foundation.
- 4B Paul's Final Counsel and Benediction 16:17-27
Paul's final words of praise and prayer to God reflect the twofold emphasis of the place of faith in the gospel and its universal application to Gentiles (15:26).

