**“WITHOUT EXCUSE”**

“*to everyone who believes”*

Romans is the longest and among the latest epistles written by former Saul of Tarsus (who began using his Roman name “Paul” when he began preaching in Roman cities.). It is his most thorough letter, addressing issues such as sin, salvation, justification, righteousness, Israel, the Jews, The Holy Spirit, Spiritual gifts and so much more.

The letter was composed by Paul, but scribed by a man named Tertius (Rom.16:22), in the home of Gaius of Corinth, one of the very few people Paul himself baptized.

Paul wrote this during the time he was in Corinth toward the end of his third missionary journey, (where he planted churches in Ephesus, Philippi, Thessalonica, Corinth and other places) before he went back to Jerusalem to be persecuted by the Jews and imprisoned by the Romans.

**Romans 15:23 “**But now that there is no more place for me to work in these regions, and since I have been longing for many years to visit you.

He had not yet been to Rome when he wrote this letter, he only got there at the end of his life on a Roman prison ship (and as far as we know, never made it to Spain). He was well acquainted with many of the people who made up the Roman church however (see chapter 16), and was very familiar with the welfare of the church in Rome through his close friends Aquilla and Priscilla who had just moved from Rome to Corinth and shared a home and business with Paul. They had been among the Jews expelled from Rome by the Roman Emperor Claudius in the year 49. (After this the church in Rome was predominantly Gentile, which is why Paul addresses it this way in the letter.)

**ACTS 18 “**Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. **2**There he met a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had ordered all Jews to leave Rome. Paul went to see them, **3**and because he was a tentmaker as they were, he stayed and worked with them.”

Interesting to note that even though the Roman Coliseum had not yet been built (80AD), Rome was still the largest and most advanced city in the world, and engaged in constant, gruesome executions for sport and entertainment for whomever they decided to kill. This is the setting that the church in Rome as they began to meet, and received this letter from Paul.

The book of Romans is the clearest and most comprehensive presentation of Christian doctrine in the New Testament. The book is a thorough exposition that presents Paul’s teaching and questions on important subjects and clearly answers and interprets them throughout the letter.

It was NOT originally written with chapter breaks, however. This is an important fact because more than any other book in the New Testament, the chapter breaks in Romans interrupt some of Paul’s most important teachings mid-thought, which can be confusing, and even misleading if you do not read and study it thoroughly beyond the chapter breaks.

*The “chapter divisions” commonly used today were developed by Stephen Langton, an Archbishop of Canterbury. Langton put the modern chapter divisions into place in around A.D. 1227. The Wycliffe English Bible of 1382 was the first Bible to use this chapter pattern. Since the Wycliffe Bible, nearly all Bible translations have followed Langton’s chapter divisions.*

We will be teaching through Romans, section by section, instead of chapter by chapter as we normally do. We must remember that some of the answers to the topics that arise, are given in later chapters, so the entire book (letter) of Romans must be taken as a whole.

Series Title Verse - “WITHOUT EXCUSE”

**Romans 1:20** “For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are *without excuse*.”

Paul talks repeatedly about how God made himself known to mankind since the creation of the world, and has shown himself through His divine nature and eternal power, so that no one can deny his existence.

He goes on to say that neither Jews who were given the law, or Gentiles through their hearts, thoughts and conscience have an excuse to deny or reject God.

ROMANS 1:1-17

**1**Paul, a *servant* of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, and set apart for the *gospel of God…*

Paul was writing to a congregation of people whom he had never visited. Some he knew (Romans 16), undoubtedly many he did not know. He wanted to assert his teaching as a spiritual authority over this Roman church, so that he can instruct them in their beliefs and doctrines.

Instead of beginning the letter by listing his impressive credentials (of which there were many), he begins by identifying himself as *“a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle”. (“servant” – gr.* doulos/slave)*.*

He knew Jesus’ teaching about being a humble servant. He knew that anyone who follows and teaches the ways of Jesus, must first and foremost do it as He did, as a servant. *[example: “…he is a servant at New River.”*

**Mark 10:45** “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

Secondly, he identifies himself as an “Apostle”. What is an Apostle?

The word *apostle* (*gr. Apostolos*) means “one who is sent out.” In the New Testament, there are two primary usages of the word *apostle*. The first is in specifically referring to the [twelve apostles](https://www.gotquestions.org/twelve-apostles-disciples-12.html) of Jesus Christ. The second is in generically referring to other individuals who were sent out to be messengers/missionaries who establish the church in other places.

It is not a rank, or title of honor, it is simply a description of the role of someone, who like Paul was sent out to preach the gospel and establish churches.

Sadly, in some circles of Christianity, the word Apostle is misused and applied as a title of esteem to people who deem themselves of higher importance than someone who is merely an Elder, a Pastor, or a Missionary. Paul uses the word is a very practical sense. “A servant who is called to be sent out to establish churches, where none existed previously”.

He also says that he is “*set apart”,* for the *“gospel of God”*

It’s interesting that he uses the phrase *“gospel of God”,* which seems different than the way we normally see the gospel named as “gospel of Jesus Christ”.

The word “gospel” means “good news. The *“gospel of God”* is the same gospel, but in Romans we see it presented as the story of God in creation, including the fulfillment of scriptures by Jesus, and establishment of the church.

— **2**the gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures **3**regarding his Son, who as to his earthly life was a descendant of David, **4**and who through the Spirit of holiness was appointed the Son of God in power by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord.

**5**Through him we received grace and apostleship to *call* all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith for his name’s sake. **6**And you also are among those Gentiles who are called to belong to Jesus Christ.

In other word, Paul is saying that he and others received undeserved favor to invite ALL Gentiles into Faith in the Messiah…and those of you in Rome are also invited.

“called” = (gr. klētoi) *“Invited in*”.

This is a very important little point because Paul is saying that it’s not just all Jews that are invited into relationship with God through faith in Jesus, but Gentles as well, *ALL* Gentiles.

**7**To all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be his holy people:

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

To all in Rome who are “loved by God” (everyone), and called (invited) to be his “holy” *gr. hagios* - “set apart”) people.

The invitation is consistent with the rest of Romans, and the entire gospel, an invitation to “*all* who would believe”.

### Paul’s Longing to Visit Rome

**8**First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is being reported all over the world. **9**God, whom I serve in *my spirit* in preaching the gospel of his Son, is my witness how constantly I remember you **10**in my prayers at all times; and I pray that now at last by God’s will, the way may be opened for me to come to you.

Paul is obviously very excited about this church in Rome. He has heard all about their faith. He is praying for an opportunity to visit them.

**11**I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong— **12**that is, that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other’s faith. **13**I do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, that I planned many times to come to you (but have been prevented from doing so until now) in order that I might have a harvest among you, just as I have had among the other Gentiles.

Paul is so eager to visit Rome, but has been prevented from doing so. Here he is in Corinth (Greece), longing to visit Rome. His plan is to collect money for the church in Jerusalem, then go back East and take it to them. Once that is accomplished, his plan is to go west again, all the way to Spain (over 2000 miles), but to make a significant visit to Rome (3/4 of the way there). What he does not know at the time, is that he will be imprisoned in Jerusalem, and then Caesarea for years, before finally making it to Rome on a prison ship.

**Romans 15:23-28“**But now that there is no more place for me to work in these regions, and since I have been longing for many years to visit you, **24**I plan to do so when I go to Spain. I hope to see you while passing through and to have you assist me on my journey there, after I have enjoyed your company for a while. **25**Now, however, I am on my way to Jerusalem in the service of the Lord’s people there. **26**For Macedonia and Achaia were pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the Lord’s people in Jerusalem. **27**They were pleased to do it, and indeed they owe it to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in the Jews’ spiritual blessings, they owe it to the Jews to share with them their material blessings. **28**So after I have completed this task and have made sure that they have received this contribution, I will go to Spain and visit you on the way.”

Collecting money for the poor in Jerusalem was part of his job description. When he was first commissioned in Galatians 2,

**Gal. 2: 6-10**And the leaders of the church had nothing to add to what I was preaching. (By the way, their reputation as great leaders made no difference to me, for God has no favorites.) **7**Instead, they saw that God had given me the responsibility of preaching the gospel to the Gentiles, just as he had given Peter the responsibility of preaching to the Jews. **8**For the same God who worked through Peter as the apostle to the Jews also worked through me as the apostle to the Gentiles.

**9**In fact, James, Peter, and John, who were known as pillars of the church, recognized the gift God had given me, and they accepted Barnabas and me as their co-workers. They encouraged us to keep preaching to the Gentiles, while they continued their work with the Jews. **10**Their only suggestion was that we keep on helping the poor, which I have always been eager to do.”

The leaders in Jerusalem gave him the right hand of fellowship, did not change his message, gave him the responsibility of preaching to non-Jewish cities, and ask him to collect money for the poor believers of Jerusalem church, which was experiencing famine and persecution.

This is first mentioned in Acts 11, by a prophet named Agabus;

**Acts 11:27-30 “**During this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. **28**One of them, named Agabus, stood up and through the Spirit predicted that a severe famine would spread over the entire Roman world. (This happened during the reign of Claudius.) **29**The disciples, as each one was able, decided to provide help for the brothers and sisters living in Judea. **30**This they did, sending their gift to the elders by Barnabas and Saul.”

Paul was on mission to preach the gospel to Gentile cities in the Roman world, Ephesus, Thessalonica, Philippi, Athens, Corinth, and hopefully Rome.

**14**I am obligated both to Greeks and non-Greeks, both to the wise and the foolish. **15**That is why I am so eager to preach the gospel also to you who are in Rome.

**16**For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile. **17**For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: “The righteous will live by faith.” <>

Paul’s excitement to visit Rome, was not just about visiting the famous city, not even only about seeing these people whom he refers to so affectionately as friends*, he wants to preach the gospel!*

The gospel (the good news about Jesus) is the ‘Power of God” to EVERYONE who “believes”. The plan of salvation was rolling out in the order God ordained. First to the Jewish people who believe, then any non-Jews who believe as well.

The plan for the gospel was always that it would start with the Jews, but quickly be made available to the whole world.

**Isaiah**

**Isa. 60:1-3** “Arise, shine;
For your light has come!
And the glory of the Lord is risen upon you.
**2**For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth,
And deep darkness the people;
But the Lord will arise over you,
And His glory will be seen upon you.
**3**The Gentiles shall come to your light.”

**Jesus** - *to Canaanite woman in the region of Tyre and Sidon*

**Matt 15:24** “I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel”

**Peter** – *speaking about his vision in Joppa, and the Gentiles in Caesarea who believed.*

**Acts 11:17“**So if God gave them the same gift he gave us who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to think that I could stand in God’s way?”

The gospel (good news) of Jesus is for e*veryone* who believes, but it takes a commitment of courage, dedication, and boldness to spread the gospel. We cannot be ashamed of the gospel despite the rejection we may receive for preaching it. Thank God that someone preached to you, and you have experienced the blessing that comes from salvation through Jesus Christ.

“This generation of Christians is responsible for this generation of souls on earth.”

― **Keith Green**

It would be tragic if this generation of believers failed to preach the gospel to this generation of lost people.

Don’t be intimidated. No two believers are the same. We all have different gifts and methods for preaching the gospel. We even have different spheres of influence. There are people you can easily reach that I can’t, and vice versa. The important thing is that we recognize the need for salvation to all who are in our lives, we are committed to preaching the gospel and that we are; Willing, Available, and, Obedient.

**Willing** - to share the gospel even when it is inconvenient or not met with acceptance.

**Available** – to have the time and bandwidth to prioritize the gospel in your life.

**Obedient** – to follow His leading, accept His calling and maintain a humble attitude of a servant as He opens up doors for ministry and opportunity in your life.

It takes faith to be Willing, Available and Obedient to the calling to preach the Gospel. But that faith is what required for all of us who believe.

**Romans 1:16-17“**For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile. **17**For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: “The righteous will live by faith.”

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