

### General outline

1. Condemnation of man (Romans 1:18—3:20)  
Man is hopelessly lost (Who we are without Christ)
2. Salvation of man (Romans 3:21—8:39)  
Christ is the only answer (Who we are in Christ)
3. Vindication of God (Romans 9:1—11:36)  
The casting away of Israel
4. Exhortation of man (Romans 12:1—15:33)  
Reflecting who we are in Christ. (Who we should be in Christ—practical application)

This section is parenthetical, justifying God's casting away of Israel.

### Romans 1:8—13

This section shows us Paul's great love for those at Rome. We see Paul praises them, prays for them and plans to visit them.

#### Verse 8

Paul praises the Roman church for their strong faith. It's not just having faith that's important, it's having the right faith. If you put all your trust and faith in getting to heaven through good works, no matter how much faith you have you will not be qualified to enter heaven. God set the standard for entrance pretty high (perfection) and anything less will result in eternal damnation. Christ is the only way through which we can attain the appearance of perfection. If we are in Christ, we pass God's test of perfection.

**Romans 3:24** being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus;

**Philippians 3:9** and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith,

**Galatians 2:16** nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified.

It's obvious that the Church at Rome had the right object of faith. Their complete trust in the person and work of Jesus Christ was heralded throughout the known world. This is a faith that is not shaken by external factors or events.

#### Verses 9—10

Paul prays often for those in Rome. He prays unceasingly. This same idea is found in 1 Thessalonians:

**1 Thessalonians 5:17** pray without ceasing;

Obviously this does not mean he was on his knees with his eyes shut and hands folded 24/7. It means to have an attitude of prayer, to be in continual fellowship and awareness of the closeness of God as you live out your day.

He encourages other believers to make prayer a priority. I believe prayer is a spiritual barometer, you can quickly tell what your spiritual condition is by your prayer life. If you easily go to the Lord in prayer for everything, if you find yourself having a continuous conversation with the Lord throughout the day, if you instantly go to Him with all your problems then there is a good chance you are where you should be spiritually. On the other hand, prayer is hard work and there are many things that interfere with it. Paul makes that clear by telling us to make prayer a priority. If it were easy, we wouldn't have to be told to do it.

**Romans 12:12** rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer,

There are also many times that we just don't know how to pray. We may be too emotionally close to a situation to pray properly. We may be so distraught that we can't even get the words out or make a complete sentence. We may in all good intentions pray that God work in one direction (i.e. healing for someone we love) but God, in His infinite wisdom and great love, has even better plans. When we pray we need to realize that "No" and "Wait" are answers to prayer just as much as "Yes" is. If we understand that God is sovereign (He knows the beginning from the end and can do anything He wants to) and is love (He wants the best for us) then we can rest in Him that in whatever the outcome, it is within God's control and is done in love. That is where faith comes in. Our faith is demonstrated by our trust in Him.

**Romans 8:26** In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words;

As Paul prayed unendingly for those in the Church at Rome he requests that they do the same.

**Romans 15:30** Now I urge you, brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God for me,

Paul never prays for himself. He prays that he would be strengthened so that he would be bold in preaching the Gospel of the Grace of God. He prays that the believer's faith would be increased. He prays for doors of opportunity to open so he can share the Gospel.

Paul's specific prayer is that he will be able to visit those in Rome. Even though Paul has close bonds with many of those attending the church, he has never had a chance to visit them. Approximately one year earlier Paul's desire to go to Rome is mentioned in Acts but in Romans mentions he had been hindered from coming to them for many years. and it would be approximately four years after writing Romans that he would finally be in Rome.

**Acts 19:21** Now after these things were finished, Paul purposed in the Spirit to go to Jerusalem after he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, saying, "After I have been there, I must also see Rome."

**Romans 15:22—23** <sup>22</sup>For this reason I have often been prevented from coming to you; <sup>23</sup>but now, with no further place for me in these regions, and since I have had for many years a longing to come to you

### Verses 11—12

Paul's reason for visiting is found in these verses. He wanted to give them some spiritual gifts help them to be established and for his own encouragement to see them growing strong, planted and firm in the Lord.

These spiritual gifts are not the gifts of the Holy Spirit since they are given to believers by God and not imparted by humans.

**Ephesians 4:11** And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers,

**1 Corinthians 7:7** Yet I wish that all men were even as I myself am However, each man has his own gift from God, one in this manner, and another in that.

Instead of saying spiritual gifts, it may be better understood that these gifts were spiritual in nature as apposed to a physical, tangible gift. The nature of this gift was probably to build up the saints (Ephesians 4:12) and to therefore establish them firm in their faith.

Not only would the saints at Rome be built up and encouraged by Paul but Paul will be encouraged to see their strong faith in action and he will in turn be encouraged and strengthened having been around those who are growing strong spiritually.

### Verses 13

Paul had planned for a number of years to visit the saints at Rome but makes it clear that circumstances beyond his control prevented him from doing so. I believe God was in control of his itinerary and therefore the One who made it impossible to get to Rome. There were other incidences where God specifically directed Paul to go to a certain area while on his Missionary Journeys (Acts 16:9—10).

This delay seemed to be a good thing because it gave the saints at Rome more time to bear spiritual fruit, which seemed to be lacking compared to other Gentile churches. It seems that even though their faith was strong, the application of their faith in the real world was lacking. They needed to be fruitful, to abound in the good works that they were called to do.

**Ephesians 2:10** For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

**1 Corinthians 15:58** Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord.

Because Paul compares the Church at Rome with the other Gentile churches it is assumed that there was a good majority of Gentiles at Rome. There was enough Jews to write three chapters specifically to them about God's dealing with Israel and her future. (Romans 9—11).

### **Verses 14—16**

We can see Paul reaffirming his commission given to him by Jesus Christ. He was to bring the Gospel to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15; 28:28; Romans 16:25). Jews would call anyone not Jewish Greeks. The Greeks would call anyone not Jewish or Grecian Barbarians. Paul addresses all the Gentile world by the terms Greek and Barbarian. The Greeks also considered themselves wise and the Barbarians were foolish. Paul makes sure he covers all Gentiles.

Paul was not ashamed of the contents of the Gospel. It was good news and there was no reason to be ashamed of it. There is nothing contained in the Gospel to make one feel ashamed. The reason Paul was not ashamed is because it contains the power of God that leads people to salvation. This power of God manifested in our salvation is made available only to those who believe. 1 Corinthians 15:1—4 make it clear what we need to believe. Anything added to or subtracted from God's criteria for our salvation nullifies God's offer because we no longer would accept what God said by faith. If we make up our own rules to get saved, we become dependant upon ourselves instead of God.

Many today read verse 16 and say that we need to preach the Gospel to the Jew before going to the Gentile. They say the Jew should be given priority over the Gentiles. The real sense of this verse can be understood if it is viewed historically and chronologically. The Gospel did go to the Jew first and was rejected. It was at this point that God cast aside Israel and raised up Paul to bring the Gospel to the Gentiles. It must be noted that the Gospel has been modified by God to accommodate some of these changes. We no longer are under the Gospel of the Kingdom as Israel was. We are now under the Gospel of Grace.

In this age there is no distinction of Jew or Gentile (Romans 10:12; Galatians 3:28; Colossians 3:11). When it comes to the Gospel, we treat all people as individuals apart from their nationality.

### **Verse 17**

The Gospel reveals God's righteousness. To be righteous is to be right, just, fair and equitable. Those who do the right things according to God's standard are declared righteous. The Greek makes it clear that this righteousness belongs to God. God is righteous therefore anything He does is right, just, fair and equitable. He can not be unrighteous.

The term "from faith to faith" is often interpreted to mean from some faith to more faith. It is looked upon as my faith growing. This passage can be literally interpreted as: "out of faith unto faith" and in context probably means out of God's faithfulness comes our faith. It is the difference between faith of God and faith in God. The first phrase shows faith coming from God—His faithfulness. The second phrase shows the faith we have in Him because He is faithful.

## Who founded the Church at Rome?

Just how did this church begin? Unfortunately, the Bible is silent on this topic and there is no extra-biblical information as to its beginnings. Many assume that Jewish believers leaving Jerusalem after the events at Pentecost went back to Rome and formed the church. This though is popular because many assume the Church began at Pentecost. That the Church at Rome began shortly after the events at Pentecost is hard to defend because the Biblical evidence seems to point in another direction.

1. Those who went to Jerusalem for Pentecost did not come as Jewish believers and went home as Christians. They were still Jews, waiting for their Messiah to come back and still practicing the Law as given to Moses. They were still following what was taught in the Gospels and embraced the Gospel of the Kingdom. They would have gone back to their synagogue.
2. There was no preaching to the Gentiles until later in Acts about 10 years after Pentecost. The Church at Rome was made up of a majority of Gentiles (Romans 1:13) and a number of Jews (Romans 9—11). This was after the conversion of Paul and after the Gospel of the Grace of God was beginning to be preached.

**Acts 11:19—20** <sup>19</sup>So then those who were scattered because of the persecution that occurred in connection with Stephen made their way to Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except to Jews alone. <sup>20</sup>But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who came to Antioch and began speaking to the Greeks also, preaching the Lord Jesus.

3. There is no other record of any church being organized by those going home after Pentecost. The reason for this, I believe, is that they went back to worship in their synagogues as believing Jews and not members of the Body of Christ. It was only as Paul preached the Gospel of Grace that separate churches, apart from the synagogue, are formed.
4. If the church at Rome were formed by Jews leaving Jerusalem after Pentecost then why would the Jewish leaders at Rome need to meet with Paul so he could explain to them the message he was preaching?

**Acts 28:22** "But we desire to hear from you what your views are; for concerning this sect, it is known to us that it is spoken against everywhere."

If the church at Rome wasn't formed by the Jews leaving Pentecost then by whom? Since those at Rome were under the Gospel of the Grace of God it seems to be pointing towards Paul. However, we know Paul did not get to Rome until much later so it could not have been formed directly by Paul but it seems to have been someone associated with him. We do know that Paul had some very strong ties with those in Rome and knew many of them personally. Romans 16 mentions at least 25 personal friends. It's interesting to see that Peter had no such relationship with them.

Believing Jews were still following the Mosaic Law in Jerusalem as late as 57 A.D. This was right after Paul had written Romans. They were not admonished by Paul for doing this and it appears that they were never instructed to put the Law aside. They would have been sinning by not following the Law.

**Acts 21:20** And when they heard it they began glorifying God; and they said to him, "You see, brother, how many thousands there are among the Jews of those who have believed, and they are all zealous for the Law; The Church at Rome is told they are not under the Law but are released from the Law and are now under the control of the Holy Spirit.

**Romans 6:14** For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace.

**Romans 7:6** But now we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter.

How can we understand these verses without contradicting each other or by saying Paul was outside the will of God by not calling out the Jews who were following the Law in Jerusalem? The solution lies in a dispensational understanding of Scripture. God's work with Israel is fading. They are in the process of being cast aside. At the same time the Church, the Body of Christ was formed at the conversion of Paul and is beginning to grow. God is still dealing with Israel while He is working with the new entity: the Church which is His Body.

**Romans 15:12** Now if their transgression is riches for the world and their failure (literally: diminishing) is riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their fulfillment be!

This means we see both programs at work. Israel is still going to be seen following the Law while at the same time God, through Paul is telling believers in the age of Grace that they are not under the Law. The Roman Church was composed of Gentiles and Jews by nationality. Those who were saved after Paul became members of the Body of Christ where there is no distinction of Jew or Gentile and therefore none are under the Law. At the same time the believing Jews in Jerusalem are Kingdom Believers and needed to follow the Law. This separation continued until the believing Jews were told to put the Law away that I believe happened in Hebrews.

Originally taught in Bethesda Sunday School October 4, 2009  
For previous notes and additional mid-Acts materials please visit [www.MidActsTruths.com](http://www.MidActsTruths.com)