

Romans

New Status - New Family - New Future

UCM is putting out a 14-Day challenge of reading the book of Romans over your Christmas break. Begin by reading through the entire letter in one sitting. Then over the next four days read through the four major sections of the letter. Then slow down by reading only two chapters a day. By the end of Christmas break we hope you'll have a good sense of the big picture of Romans and will find it easier to listen to what God might be speaking to you through this book.

14-DAY CHALLENGE:

Date	Task
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 1	Read the entire book of Romans (The Message)
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 2	Read Romans chapters 1-4
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 3	Read Romans chapters 5-8
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 4	Read Romans chapters 9-11
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 5	Read Romans chapters 12-16
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 6	Watch The Bible Project video on Romans (Part 1 and Part 2)
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 7	Read Romans chapters 1-2
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 8	Read Romans chapters 3-4
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 9	Read Romans chapters 5-6
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 10	Read Romans chapters 7-8
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 11	Read Romans chapters 9-10
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 12	Read Romans chapters 11-12
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 13	Read Romans chapters 13-14
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 14	Read Romans chapters 15-16



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UCM will be reading the book of Romans this semester as a community. We are praying that God will speak to you through this book, as you commit to reading it devotionally, studying it together, and seeking to live out what God is speaking to you and us as community.

We are encouraging you to read the book section by section. There are four major sections to the book; chapters 1-4, 5-8, 9-11, and 12-16. Try to read the whole section the week before you study a particular chapter. That way you'll have a better understanding of the complete flow of the argument that Paul is writing about. Romans is a dense and magnificent piece of writing, and we believe the more you marinate in the text, the easier it will be to listen to what God has to say to you through it.

Date	Bible Study:	During the Week Read:				
Week 1	Romans 1	Chapters 1-4	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 2	Romans 3	Chapters 1-4	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 3						
Week 4	Romans 5	Chapters 5-8	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 5	Romans 6	Chapters 5-8	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 6	Romans 8	Chapters 5-8	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 7						
Week 8	Romans 9	Chapters 9-11	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Week 9	Romans 11	Chapters 9-11	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Week 10						
Week 11	Romans 12	Chapters 12-16	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 12	Romans 14	Chapters 12-16	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



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ICEBREAKER

- What was your Christmas highlight?
- Did you read the entire letter of Romans over xmas? What was that experience like?

SUMMARY:

This letter was written by the Apostle Paul to the Roman church, which was made up of Jewish and Gentile people. Before this Cesar had expelled the Jewish people for five years, and when they were finally allowed to return the church was mostly Gentile Christians, which was cause for division of the church. One of Paul's major themes in this book is for the church to become unified. In chapters 1-4 Paul's major theme is how the Gospel reveals God's righteousness.

PASSAGE: Romans 1:1-17

1. *Read Romans 1:1-17.* What do you think Paul's purpose is in writing this letter to the church in Roman? Paul had not himself founded the church in Rome or visited there previously. But as Romans 16 will tell you he had friends and relatives there. Why else does Paul want to visit the Roman Christians so desperately?
2. *Watch the Bible Project video on Romans Part 1.* What did you learn from the video that fills in a bit more why Paul is writing this letter?
3. Paul begins his letter by saying who he is, and who the letter is intended for. But, as in some of his other letters, he expands this formula almost beyond the breaking point by adding more and more information on both side. What significant themes are mentioned?
4. What is the gospel or good news Paul describes in this expanded greeting? (Include in your discussion the themes of the old testament covenant, the incarnation, death and resurrection, lordship of Christ, grace, and obedience, and inclusion of all people.)
5. The Greeks, who had ruled the world centuries before the Romans, divided the world into two: Greeks and the rest. They called the rest "barbarians," probably because their languages sounded like meaningless mumblings. For a true Greek, the Romans counted as barbarians. But it is a different division of the world that occupies Paul for the rest of the letter. Jews divided the world into two as well: Jews and the rest. The referred to the rest sometimes as "the nations," sometimes as "Gentiles" and sometimes as "the Greeks," because as far as they were concerned, the rest of the world was Greek-speaking. How does the good news address the divisions in Rome which Paul highlights in verses 14-17?



6. God has been faithful in keeping his covenant. Now we are called to have faith ourselves in response, as Paul highlights in verse 17. In addition to providing a future hope, how does salvation also provided a rescue for us from a present reality?

SHARE & PRAYER

Break up into groups of 2-3. Discuss one major take away and one action point from the discussion. Then close in prayer for each other in light of this text.

NOTE: On Romans 1:17 (“righteousness” = “covenant faithfulness”) *

Here Paul introduces a word and theme that will be critical throughout the letter. The Greek word and its variants are often translated as “righteous,” “righteousness,” “just” or “justice.” The problem is that Paul (thought writing in Greek) has Hebrew words and meanings in mind, which English translations often overlook.

Jewish readers of Paul's day would understand the phrase “the righteousness of God” to refer to God's own faithfulness to his promises to Israel, to his covenant (especially as seen in the suffering servant of Israel 40-55). He keeps his word and thereby shows his trustworthiness, justice and righteousness.

The word translated “righteousness” comes from the Jewish courts in which there are three parties - the judge, the plaintiff, and the defendant. There is no prosecuting attorney, no defence attorney, no jury. Each party makes their case to the judge who is called on to be impartial, to punish wrongdoing and support the defenceless (as called for by the covenant). A judge who acts in this way shows his righteousness, his faithfulness in upholding the covenant.

When the judge finds in favour of either the plaintiff or the defendant, that party is declared “righteous” - not morally good and deserving of a favourable outcome, but one who is given the status by the court of “being in the right” as a result of the judge's decision. **The problem is that in Greek and English *righteous* carries moral tones that are not there in the Jewish court system.**

What does this mean for what Paul is saying in Romans?

The judge does not impart or impute or transfer his righteousness, his just character to either the defendant or the plaintiff. Likewise God, the judge, hears Israel plead her case for vindication against her enemies. She longs to be justified, acquitted, and calls on God to be faithful to his covenant promises to her and do so. When God does act in this way, his people will have gained the court-decreed status of righteousness, but God's own righteousness, which is instead his **covenant faithfulness** that Israel by definition cannot share.

As Paul will explain more fully in Romans 3, it is because of God's gracious verdict in Christ that we, Jews and Gentiles, have this new righteous standing. That is the good news Paul says in Romans 1:17 that he is so anxious to announce, for it reveals God's **covenant faithfulness** to the world. (*Reference: N. T. Wright, Romans Study Guide)



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ICEBREAKER

- What was the best gift you've ever been given? (Did you have to work for it or was it free?)

SUMMARY:

Chapter 2 leads in to chapter 3 by saying that all humanity is guilty and hopelessly trapped in their sin. However God's response was the good news of Jesus. Jesus came to die for all of humanity's sins. Jesus took into himself all the consequences that humanity deserved and overcame it all through his resurrection. Jesus became what we are, sinners, in order that we could become like him. Paul goes on to talk about Justification, which means, to declare righteous. Therefore because of what Jesus did for humanity on the cross those who are in Christ get a new status, new family, and a new future.

PASSAGE: Romans 3:9-31

1. Why do you think Paul quotes so much from the Old Testament?
2. When have you received grace from someone when you have fallen short?
3. What does it mean that "a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law"?
4. Paul says that Jesus' faithfulness was his dealing with sin to the point of death. How does the death of Jesus show God's willingness to deal with sin when he had earlier left it unpunished, perhaps making him look unjust? (v.26)
5. Why do you think that people prefer to work their way to heaven instead of accepting the free gift? (v. 24)
6. This passage explains the foundation of our Christian faith. How could you take these verses and restate them in a way that would communicate the message of Christ to people around you who do not know him?
7. Have you tried to explain this message of Christ to a friend before?
8. How does Paul want readers to respond to this chapter?

SHARE & PRAYER

Break up into groups of 2-3. Have each person think of one friend they have that does not know Jesus and practice how they might share this good news with them. After each has taken a turn, then pause and pray for opportunities to communicate the message of the gospel to those friends in relevant ways.



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ICEBREAKER

- Ask each person to reveal an accomplishment they achieved before they turned 18?

SUMMARY:

Having laid the foundation of chapters 1-4, Paul begins to build the structure: a picture of Christian life in which all the ancient promises of God are coming true. And at the centre of these promises is the establishment of a loving, welcoming personal relationship between individual humans and the Creator God himself. Chapter 5 begins the second major section in Romans (Ch 5-8). In this section, specifically in chapter 5, Paul contrasts the Old Testament character, Adam, his name meaning humanity, with Jesus, the new Adam. Adam chose sin and selfishness therefore everyone faces God's judgement because humanity becomes slaves to sin, leading to death. Jesus stands as the head to a new humanity that is being transformed by his gift of grace and sacrificial love.

PASSAGE: Read Romans 5:1-21

1. A key phrase in chapter 5 of Romans is "peace with God." What does peace with God look like as described in verses 1-2?
2. Notice how the progression in verse 3-5 build from one point to the next. How these verses both difficult and hopeful for us as we live out the Christian faith in the world today?
3. Paul's argument in verse 6-11 takes the form - familiar in various systems of logic, not least Jewish ones - of a "how much more." (Notice the repetition of "If X, then 'how much more' Y"). If someone has struggled up a sheer rock face, against all odds, to get to the top of the mountain, they are not likely to give up when, at the top of the vertical wall, they are faced with an easy stroll on a grassy path. How does this analogy explain verses 9-11?
4. The logic of "how much more" continues in Paul's discussion of Adam and Jesus in verse 12-17. How is the work of the one man, Jesus, far beyond the effect of the sin of the one man, Adam?
5. Paul uses "reign" three times in the verses 12-17. Discuss the distinction between the types of "reign". Who is reigning and what does that look like?
6. How do verses 18-21 summarize the entire letter of Romans so far?

SHARE & PRAYER

Break up into groups of 2-3. Think about an area of your life, your community, or the world, that demonstrates the brokenness of sin. Discuss with each other what that area would look like if there was a "reign of grace" instead of death. Close by praying with one another.



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ICEBREAKER:

Some members of your group might have been baptized as infants, others might have been baptized more recently as young adults, and some may still have not made that decision yet. Ask your group about the variety of experiences and traditions around baptism there are in the room. (e.g. my church liked to do baptisms at sunrise on Easter morning at Jericho beach).

SUMMARY:

Chapter 6 Paul reminds the Roman church that following Jesus means leaving behind their old humanity and walking in Christ's new humanity. The baptism was a representation of that change. When someone gets baptized their life gets joined to Jesus, therefore what is true of Him is now true of those who have been baptized. Paul urges the church in his letter to not be slaves to their old selves, before baptism, but to walk in the righteousness of Christ in his new humanity.

PASSAGE: Read Romans 6:1-23

1. The book of Exodus tells the story of God's people being enslaved in Egypt and of how God delivered them through Moses. They left behind their old lives of slavery in Egypt and wandered in the wilderness led by God's presence until they entered the promise land. Here in Romans, Paul tells a similar story. Where do you see echoes of the Exodus story in verses 1-5?
2. What is Paul's understanding of baptism in verses 1-5?
3. In verses 6-14, Paul describes the true identity of a Christian as someone who is "dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus". How can Christians be dead to sin, but yet still struggle with sin daily?
4. We are called to be "resurrection-people", living our lives as an "offering to God" (v. 13). Discuss what you think that means - in your life and the life of this community?
5. In verses 15-23, Paul uses the example of slavery to talk about more about how the gospel creates a new humanity. Discuss what you think "being a slave to righteousness" means and what are its implications? Try to think of some examples of might be?

SHARE & PRAYER:

Break up into groups of 2-3. One at a time, read Romans 6:22-23 over each person in your small group. Speak this truth over each person: "<Name>, you have been set free from sin!". Then ask each person to say one way they will try to walk in this truth this week, and be "slaves to righteousness."



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ICEBREAKER:

In this week's passage, Paul uses the illustration of grafting branches into an established olive tree to make his point. Watch this video to learn a bit about grafting olive branches:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WHDJ6xp3mkQ>

SUMMARY:

Chapter 11 explains what Israel's future is. Paul explains that God has not written off his people, and he goes on to explain that there are many Jewish people who follow Jesus as well as those who reject him. However God has used their rejection for his purposes. The Gospel spread even quicker into the Gentile world thus making the family more multi-ethnic. Once Israel believes God's promise of righteousness through Christ, they will be grafted back into the olive tree. Paul doesn't say how or when but trusts that God will not give up on his covenant people.

PASSAGE: Read Romans 11:1-36

1. In verses 1-5, Paul refers to the story of Elijah, quoting from him when he felt like he was the only remaining faithful Israelite. Are there times at university when you feel like the only Christian on campus, in your classes, or in dorm?
2. In v. 6 it says that it is no longer on the basis of works. Does that mean faith use to be works based?
3. Beginning in v. 13 and continuing through v. 32 Paul is speaking directly to the Gentile Christians in the Roman church. What seems to be the danger in the Gentile believers that Paul is addressing? What is he warning them?
4. One thing that people may not know about olive trees in ancient Israel is that, from time, gardeners performed grafting operations on them. Some olives grew wild, and would often be quite strong in themselves though not producing good fruit. The gardener might decide to take that energy and harness it by grafting shoots from a proper, cultivated olive into the trunk of a wild olive, thus combining the energy of the wild tree and the fruitfulness of the cultivated one. Why does Paul reverse the illustration?
5. What is the mystery that Paul wants us to understand in v. 25?
6. How is God's mercy showered on all in verses 25-32?
7. In v. 26 it says that "all Israel" will be saved. This verse can be confusing. Does Paul mean all Jews, or all believing Jews? How can we interpret this verse?

SHARE & PRAYER:

Break up into groups of 3-4. Notice v. 33-36 end chapter 11 by using the rich traditions of Hebrew praise from Isaiah and Job. Re-read these verses together and discuss how Paul wants us to feel and respond in prayer with and for one another.



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ICEBREAKER:

What is the best gift you've ever given or received?

SUMMARY:

Chapters 12-16 is the third and final section of the book of Romans that we've been studying. This section Paul shows readers that the church needs to be unified as one, through love, forgiveness and using each others giftings. Chapter 12 specifically goes into how diverse the Roman church is and how they should be unified through the different gifts given to them. Paul urges the church to love genuinely and bless their enemies. Jews and Gentiles are now one family being renewed by God's spirit, fulfilling ancient promises. Therefore the only reasonable response is for the church to be unified. Chapter twelve begins to break that tension, and show the Roman church what their response should be.

PASSAGE: Read Romans 12: 1-21

1. Verse 1 of this chapter Paul writes the church to be, "living sacrifices". How can you be a "living sacrifice" to those around you right now?
2. What would it look like to "renew" our minds as mentioned in verse two?
3. Paul lists a number of gifts given to the church in verses 6-8, has anyone seen one of these gifts in anyone at UCM? If so who and how did you see it in them?
4. How do Paul's words in verses 3-5 help Christians be more unified in one body?
5. Does UCM have the kind of unity Paul is describing in this chapter? What could we do to improve it?
6. In verses 9-16 Paul lists many ways of godly living, which one do you find most difficult and why?

SHARE & PRAYER:

Split up into groups and pray for one another to live more as Paul describes in chapter 12. Then also pray for unity in our churches and UCM.



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ICEBREAKER:

What are some examples of restrictions that some Christians believe and others do not? Or do you have a Christian friend that practices a spiritual discipline that you do not or do not understand its value?

SUMMARY:

A bit of context we need to know for this chapter is that Paul is writing this letter to the Roman church not long after the Jews were allowed to return to Rome in AD54. Jewish Christians would have been returning to a church filled with Gentile believers who had come from pagan backgrounds. In a city like Rome, many animals were slaughtered as sacrifices in pagan temples and then served up in an adjoining eating establishment or offered for sale in the open market. There it would likely be impossible to know which meat had been part of a pagan sacrifice and which had not. No devout Jew would dream of eating meat that had been.

PASSAGE: Read Romans 14: 1-23

1. Who does Paul consider to be the “weak in faith” and the “strong in faith”? What do you suppose are the attitudes these two groups have towards each other?
2. How is Paul attempting to break down barriers between ethnic groups in verses 1-6?
3. What is Paul getting at in verses 7-9?
4. What is the overriding perspective that the Christians in Rome need to learn in dealing with differences with each other?
5. How can we as believers know on which issues we can live with differences of opinion and which we cannot?
6. Paul says in verse 14 that nothing is unclean in itself, but how does he say something can become “unclean” (vv. 13-23)?
7. In what specific ways does the church today reverse verse 17 and make God’s kingdom about “food and drink” rather than about justice, peace, and joy?

SHARE & PRAYER:

Split up into groups and discuss what is your take-away from today’s study? How can we pray for you in light of this take-away? Alternatively, you could discuss ways we can turn our focus to justice, peace and love, and then pray for each other.



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ICEBREAKER:

What is a dream you have for your life?

SUMMARY:

Paul is in the process of concluding his letter to the Romans with some personal comments, but at the beginning of chapter 15 Paul ends where he begun in chapter 1. Paul is declaring that Jesus, who is the son of God is now the Lord of the whole world. Back in chapter 1 Paul said that announcing this good news of Jesus was his great calling. Here at the end he again recalls his glorious passion. Paul concludes this chapter with his heart to visit Rome but he explains that he has to journey in a different direction before he can return there.

PASSAGE: Read Romans 15: 1-24

1. In verses 1-6, Paul continues his line of thought from chapter 14 about the “strong” and “weak”. In this context, how does Paul exhort us to follow the example of Christ?
2. What do these passages reveal again about God's ultimate purposes in the world that Paul has been emphasizing throughout the letter to the Romans?
3. Paul moves in verse 14-24 to consider his longing to visit the Roman church and his calling as an apostle. How does Paul see himself as an OT “priest” in the ministry of the gospel?
4. The situation in Rome was a bit complicated for Paul. There were Jewish Christians who had left Rome some years previously and had now returned. Some of them had been members of churches Paul had founded and had actually worked alongside Paul as trusted Christians who had embraced the faith when it had been previously proclaimed by others, perhaps even Peter. What seems to be Paul's concern in coming to visit and minister in Rome?
5. Did you know: There is no evidence that Paul ever got to Spain. But his desire to go there and, perhaps, establish a new “home base” was one of the reasons he wrote the letter to the Romans.

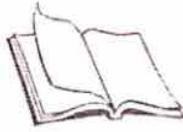
SHARE & PRAYER:

Split up into groups of 3-4 people.

Share: What lesson is there for us in the fact that Paul wrote Romans in preparation for a dream that he may never have realized?

Prayer: Pray for each other that you would see the small things that God is accomplishing for his purposes as you pursue a dream he has placed in your heart.





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ORIENTING DATA FOR ROMANS

- **Content:** a letter of instruction and exhortation setting forth Paul's understanding of the gospel—that Jew and Gentile together form one people of God, based on God's righteousness received through faith in Jesus Christ and on the gift of the Spirit
- **Author:** the apostle Paul
- **Date:** ca. A.D. 57, from Corinth (cf. Rom 15:25–26 with 1 Cor 16:1–7)
- **Recipients:** the church in Rome, which was neither founded by Paul nor under his jurisdiction—although he greets at least twenty-six people known to him (16:3–16)
- **Occasion:** a combination of three factors: (1) Phoebe's proposed visit to Rome (16:1–2; which would begin in the house church of old friends Priscilla and Aquila, 16:3–5), (2) Paul's own anticipated visit to Rome and desire that they help him with his proposed mission to Spain (15:17–29), and (3) information (apparently brought by visitors) about tensions between Jewish and Gentile believers there
- **Emphases:** Jews and Gentiles together as the one people of God; the role of the Jews in God's salvation through Christ; salvation by grace alone, received through faith in Christ Jesus and effected by the Spirit; the failure of the law and success of the Spirit in producing true righteousness; the need to be transformed in mind (by the Spirit) so as to live in unity as God's people in the present

OVERVIEW OF ROMANS

This letter is arguably the most influential book in Christian history, perhaps in the history of Western civilization. But that doesn't necessarily

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make it easy to read! While theologically minded people love it, others steer away from it (except for a few favorite passages), thinking it is too deep for them. But the overall argument and the reasons for it can be uncovered with a little spadework.

At issue is tension between Jewish and Gentile Christians in Rome, who probably meet in separate house churches and who appear to be at odds regarding Gentile adherence to the Jewish law—especially over the three basic means of Jewish identity in the Diaspora: circumcision (2:25–3:1; 4:9–12), Sabbath observance, and food laws (14:1–23). What is at stake practically is whether Gentiles must observe the Jewish law on these points. What is at stake theologically is the gospel itself—whether “God’s righteousness” (= his righteous salvation that issues in right standing with God) comes by way of “doing” the law or by faith in Christ Jesus and the gift of the Spirit.

What drives the argument from beginning (1:16) to end (15:13) is expressed in the conclusion—that God might give Jews and Gentiles “the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had,” so that together “with one mind and one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (15:5–6). The focus of the argument is on what makes such unity possible: God’s righteousness given to Jew and Gentile alike on the basis of faith in Christ Jesus and effected through the gift of the Spirit. This primary issue is surrounded by matters having to do with Paul’s hoped-for relationship with this church at the strategic center of the empire (1:1–15; 15:14–33), followed by a commendation of Phoebe (16:1–2) and greetings to friends (16:3–16), concluding with a final exhortation, greetings, and doxology (16:17–27).

The argument itself is in four major parts (1:16–4:25; 5:12–8:30; 9:1–11:32; 12:1–15:12), each of which concludes on a confessional note that also serves as a transition to the next part (5:1–11; 8:31–39; 11:33–36; 15:13). In turn the parts take up (1) the issue of human sinfulness, showing first its universality (Gentile and Jew alike, with the law offering no advantage to the Jew) and then the effectiveness of Christ in dealing with sin, so that right standing with God is based on faith alone—for which Abraham, the “father of us all” (4:16), serves as exhibit A; (2) how faith in Christ and the gift of the Spirit effect the kind of righteousness that the law intended but could not pull off, since it lacked the power to deal with human sinfulness; (3) how God is faithful despite Jewish unbelief, having a place for both Gentiles and Jews

in the new "olive tree" (11:24); (4) what the righteousness effected by Christ and by the Spirit (thus apart from the law) looks like in terms of relationships within the believing community and beyond.

SPECIFIC ADVICE FOR READING ROMANS

The key to a good reading of Romans is not to get bogged down over the many bits of detail that beg for an answer. Rather, use "A Walk through Romans" to get the big picture, and then perhaps come back and, with the help of a good commentary, try to discover answers to its many pieces.

Knowing two things may help you as you read. First, the argumentation Paul employs in this letter is patterned after a form of ancient rhetoric known as the diatribe, in which a teacher tried to persuade students of the truth of a given philosophy through imagined dialogue, usually in the form of questions and answers. Very often an imagined debate partner (interlocutor) would raise objections or false conclusions, which, after a vigorous "By no means!" the teacher would take pains to correct.

You will notice as you read how thoroughgoing the diatribe pattern is. The imaginary interlocutor appears at several key places (2:1–5, 17–24; 8:2; 9:19–21; 11:17–24; 14:4, 10). Paul debates first with a Jew (2:1–5, 17–24), with whom he dialogues in most of the argument that follows, as he raises and answers questions and responds to anticipated objections (2:26; 3:1–9, 27–31; 4:1–3; 6:1–3, 15–16; 7:1, 7, 13; 8:31–35; 9:19; etc.). A Gentile interlocutor is finally introduced in 11:13–24. In both cases Paul begins by attacking ethnic pride (2:17–20; 11:18). Notice further how all of this is suspended when he comes to the exhortations that begin part 4 (12:1–13:14), only to be picked up again when the issue of Jew-Gentile relationships over food and days is brought to the fore (14:4, 10). Sometimes this form of argumentation can be dizzying, especially when in the course of it Paul makes some sweeping statements that may look contradictory. But in the end, all individual statements have to be kept in the context of the whole argument.

Second, the nature of the argumentation is such that it follows a logical sequence of ideas, but you should not think that this also represents a sequence of Christian experience (justification [chs. 1–5] followed by sanctification [chs. 6–8], as is often suggested). For example, even though the role of the Spirit is not examined thoroughly until 7:4–6 and 8:1–30, his role is already anticipated in 2:28–29 and 5:5. Likewise the inadequacy of the law is first presented in chapter 2, but in the context

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of the life of the Spirit it is raised again in 7:7–8:4 and hinted at again in 13:8–10. And what is said about the Spirit in 8:1–30 makes clear that his presence is presupposed in the argument of 6:1–14. Likewise the ethical specifics in chapters 12–14 presuppose the argument of chapters 6 and 8. The point is that Paul does not present the whole gospel at every turn; as you move forward in the letter, you will need constantly to try to keep the whole argument in view.

A WALK THROUGH ROMANS

□ 1:1–7 *Salutation*

In this, the longest by far of his salutations, note how Paul already focuses on the gospel (vv. 2–4, to be resumed in vv. 16–17) as including the Gentiles (vv. 5–7).

□ 1:8–15 *Thanksgiving and Prayer*

Watch how Paul's standard thanksgiving and prayer evolve into a narrative about his longing to come to Rome, a narrative that will be resumed in 15:14. Note especially how he backs away from pressing his apostolic status.

□ 1:16–17 *The Thesis Stated*

As you read the rest of the letter, you will see how many of its ideas and concerns are anticipated in this thesis sentence (together with vv. 2–4): the gospel is about God's Son; it is God's power bringing salvation to Jew and Gentile alike; it is the revelation of God's righteousness, available to all on the same basis, namely, faith in Christ Jesus.

□ 1:18–5:11 *Part I: On Sin, the Law, Christ, and Faith*

Paul begins by painting the dismal picture of the human condition, starting with Gentile sinfulness: Idolatry leads both to the worship of the creature and to injustice and hatred of every kind (1:18–32). But note that he quickly counters by arguing that having the law does not thereby advantage the Jews, allowing them to judge others (2:1–11): (some) Gentiles who do not have the law do what the law demands (2:12–16) and (some) Jews who have the law still break the law (2:17–27). The only hope lies with *heart circumcision* (see Deut 30:6) by the Spirit (Rom 2:28–29).

After a brief (diatribal) look at the issue of God's faithfulness in light of Jewish sinfulness (3:1–8), Paul concludes with the bad news—that Jew and Gentile alike are sinful and need help, which the law could not provide (3:9–20).

God's own response is the greatest good news ever: Through the death of Jesus Christ, God's righteousness is given apart from the law and is available to Jew and Gentile alike by faith (3:21–26). Note how Paul then raises the three questions (3:27–31) to be answered in the rest of the argument: (1) "Boasting" is excluded; (2) its exclusion is based on the "law" of faith, apart from the Mosaic Law; (3) faith is the only answer, since there is only one God—for Gentiles as well as Jews.

For all of this Abraham serves as exhibit A (4:1–25). Note the emphasis that Abraham not only believed God and thus was credited with righteousness but also that this happened while he was still uncircumcised (a Gentile), thus making him the father of all, both Jew and Gentile alike (that is, those who believe God as he did, vv. 23–25).

Paul's response to this good news is to burst into confessional rhapsody, urging all his readers to enter into "peace" and to boast/rejoice in their hope and in their sufferings, since "we" have experienced God's love in Jesus Christ (5:1–11).

□ 5:12–8:39 Part 2: On Sin, Christ, the Law, and the Spirit

Note how part 2 begins as part 1 did, with the universal scope of human sinfulness. But now Paul goes back to Adam in order to point out the equally universal scope (= for Gentiles as well as Jews) of the righteousness made available in Christ (5:12–21).

Paul then takes up the issue of sins, given that sin itself is taken care of through the death and resurrection of Christ. Using three analogies—death/burial/resurrection pictured in Christian baptism (6:1–14), slavery and freedom (6:15–23), and death in marriage (7:1–3)—he concludes in 7:4–6 by urging that we die to the old (the flesh [sinful nature] and the law) and live in the new (Christ and the Spirit).

Since Paul has been so hard on the law to this point, he digresses momentarily to exonerate the law—it is God-given, after all—despite its role in our death (7:7–25). Lacking the Spirit, it stood helplessly by while "another law"—the sin that it aroused—took over and "killed" Paul (vv. 14–24).

God's response to this (8:1–30) is a *third law*, the Spirit (v. 2), who fulfills the law in us (v. 4) and stands against the sinful nature (vv. 5–13).

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The Spirit also leads us in the present (vv. 14–17) and guarantees the future (vv. 18–25), while aiding us in prayer in the midst of suffering (vv. 26–27) and conforming us to Christ’s likeness (vv. 28–30).

Paul’s response to all of this is the ecstasy of 8:31–39. God is “for us,” not against us, in Christ, from whose love we can never be separated and in whom we are more than conquerors in all situations. Thus believers (especially Gentiles) don’t need to go the way of the law.

□ 9:1–11:36 **Part 3: God’s Faithfulness and Jewish Unfaithfulness**

Paul turns now to address the tension between God’s faithfulness (in bringing Jew and Gentile together as one people) and Jewish unfaithfulness (in that the majority of Jews have not responded to the good news in Christ). The argument is in three phases, bookended by a lament over those of Israel who have rejected Christ (9:1–5) and a confessional conclusion, where Paul bows in praise and wonder before God’s awesome sovereignty (11:33–36).

Note how the first phase (9:6–29) resumes the question of God’s faithfulness from 3:3. Despite Jewish rejection, God’s word has not failed; election needs to be understood along the new lines of a remnant and God’s mercy on Gentiles.

Watch how the second phase (9:30–10:21), although still dealing with God’s faithfulness, presents Israel’s own responsibility for missing out on what God is now doing (with Gentiles now “in” and much of Israel “out”).

The third phase (11:1–32) takes up the very tough question of whether God has rejected Israel altogether. Despite appearances, God has not cast off his ancient people; they have stumbled, but not totally fallen. Returning then to the concept of “remnant,” Paul argues that God’s new remnant people includes both Jew and Gentile; both have served, in different ways, to help bring the others in.

□ 12:1–15:13 **Part 4: The Practical Outworking of God’s Righteousness**

The (preceding) mercies of God call us to service of God, based on a renewed mind (by the Spirit) that can determine what pleases God (12:1–2). Note that verses 3–8 offer the basic theological grounding for the exhortations that follow: The believing community (of Jew and Gentile together as one body) is the arena in which all of this is to be worked

t, first at the interpersonal level (vv. 9–21) and then in the world (vv. 3:1–7). Love is the linchpin (vv. 8–10), holding everything together and fulfilling the law and making the rest of the argument work).

After pointing out to Gentile believers that the end of the law does not mean the end of righteousness (13:11–14), Paul concludes the whole argument on the very practical issue of Jew and Gentile respecting each other's attitudes toward food and days (14:1–15:13), urging each to accept the other (14:1; 15:1, 7). Notice how, in marvelous argumentation, he sides with the Gentiles theologically (14:17–18) but with the Jews practically (vv. 19–21). And note especially how the whole argument concludes in 15:5–8 with prayer and exhortation to “accept one another,” followed by a series of Old Testament texts that include the Gentiles in God's story (vv. 9–12). The whole argument from 1:16 then concludes with the prayer of 15:13.

15:14–33 *Paul, the Gentile Mission, and Rome*

Picking up where the argument left off in 15:5–13, Paul points out his own role in bringing the gospel to Gentiles (vv. 14–22), which in turn leads him to lay out his plans to come to Rome—by way of Jerusalem (vv. 23–33).

16:1–27 *Concluding Matters*

The conclusion to the letter begins with a commendation of its bearer, Phoebe (16:1–2). This is followed in turn by greetings to friends in Rome (vv. 3–16), a final exhortation (vv. 17–20), final greetings (vv. 21–24), and a doxology (vv. 25–27). Note how at the very end Paul again stresses that it is in keeping with the prophets that “the Gentiles . . . come to faith and obedience” (cf. 1:2–7).

Here God's story gets told in its primary theological expression. God's love for all, both Jew and Gentile alike, found expression in Christ's death and resurrection; the gift of the Spirit makes it all work out in everyday life.