

# The Good News For All People



## **Studies in Romans**

Men's Bible Studies

2020-21

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## I. Schedule for 2020-21

Date	Topic	Leader	Story
9/15	Intro. to Studying and Applying NT Epistles – <a href="#">Zoom Recording</a>	Shawn	
9/22	Rom 1:1-6		
9/29	No Meeting		
10/6	Rom 1:7-17		
10/13	Rom 1:18-23		
10/20	Rom 1:24-32		
10/27	No Meeting		
11/3	Rom 2:1-11		
11/6-8	Men's Retreat, Mt Hermon	TBD	
11/10	Flex Week		
11/17	Rom 2:12-16		
11/24	No Meeting: Thanksgiving		
12/1	Rom 2:17-29		
12/8	Rom 3:1-8		
12/15	Rom 3:9-20		
12/22	No Meeting		
12/29	No Meeting		
1/5	Rom 3:21-31		
1/12	Rom 4:1-12		
1/19	Rom 4:13-25		
1/26	No Meeting		
2/2	Rom 5:1-11		

<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Leader</b>	<b>Story</b>
<b>2/9</b>	Rom 5:12-21		
<b>2/16</b>	No Meeting: Pres Day		
<b>2/23</b>	Rom 6:1-14		
<b>3/2</b>	Rom 6:15-23		
<b>3/9</b>	Rom 7:1-6		
<b>3/16</b>	No Meeting		
<b>3/23</b>	Rom 7:7-13		
<b>3/30</b>	Rom 7:14-25		
<b>4/6</b>	Rom 8:1-11		
<b>4/13</b>	No Meeting		
<b>4/20</b>	Flex Week		
<b>4/27</b>	Rom 8:12-17		
<b>5/4</b>	Rom 8:18-27		
<b>5/11</b>	Rom 8:28-39		
<b>5/18</b>	<b>Wrap Up Breakfast</b>		



### III. Background to Romans

#### A. The Introduction

C.E.B. Cranfield, the 20<sup>th</sup> century British scholar, famously compared Paul's argument of Romans 9-11 to ascending the North Wall of the Eiger, perhaps the steepest and deadliest technical climb in the Alps. Cranfield would later say of his commentary on Romans (his magnum opus) that it did not "come anywhere near" doing the letter justice.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, Romans is an impressive piece of literature. It is the longest letter in the New Testament with the most detailed presentation of the Gospel. Additionally, it deals with practical topics that can be found scattered throughout the headlines of 21<sup>st</sup> century newspapers. Lastly, as the letter is named, it is written to the church in Rome, made up of all kinds of ethnic groups, including "Greeks... barbarians... the wise... the foolish" (1:14). This book truly is a theological heavyweight, but relevant to everyday life, while applying to all people. What a privilege to be able to spend two years studying this majestic letter!



*The 1<sup>st</sup> Century Roman World*

#### B. The Roman Life

Sometimes our modern movies depict life in the Roman Empire as idyllic, even utopian. However, Rodney Stark in his book, *The Rise of Christianity*, explains that life in the Roman Empire was anything but peaceful and comfortable. For one thing, life was violent. The gladiator fights are legendary, but essentially all the different ethnic groups hated each other, resulting in a very violent culture. Crime was rampant. People simply would not walk the streets at night. Sexual promiscuity was out of control, which Paul will speak to in this letter. Graffiti was everywhere. The cities were simply covered in graffiti, but even more, the cities were altogether filthy. Dirt and grime covered everything. In addition, the cities were filled with homeless people. The bottom line is that the Roman Empire would not have been a fun place to live. And, in a world like that, hopelessness and despair reigned.

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Thielman, Frank, *Romans, ZECNT* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018), 13.



Most people in Rome in the first century lived in “high rises,” large apartment blocks of 3-4 stories high. Shops typically occupied the first story. Light was provided through windows. There were no kitchens, so food was either bought from shops or cooked over outdoor grills. There was also no heating. Bathrooms could be available for the entire apartment block but not always.

Because everyone was in close proximity, life was communal in nature. There were many opportunities for interaction outside of your family group. There were clubs and trade guilds, typically with religious associations, where members would meet to accomplish goals and help each other.

Religion and philosophy also characterized and permeated the Roman culture. Cicero famously said, “We have excelled neither Spain in population, nor Gaul in vigor, nor Carthage in versatility, nor Greece in art ... but in piety, in devotion to religion... we have excelled every race and every nation.” Indeed, religion was a part of everyday life and Romans took it very seriously. There were a variety of religions and philosophies to choose from, and mixing and matching of them was common. As polytheistic and inclusivist as it the culture was though, Jews and Christians were usually considered atheists. Some of the mainstream religions were these:

- Greek gods: These are the classical Greek pantheon that was melded with the Roman deities (ie. Jupiter -> Zeus, Hermes ->Mercury, Venus -> Aphrodite, Ares -> Mars, etc). These deities were distant and generally uninterested. By the 1<sup>st</sup> century, the following of these gods was declining for various reasons, which allowed for the mystery religions to take hold.
- Emperor worship: Julius Caesar was the first to be worshiped. Caligula, Nero and Vespasian began to take it much more seriously, eventually leading to the imposition of emperor worship as the imperial religion by the 3<sup>rd</sup> century.
- Mystery religions: These were more individual, which offered more fellowship with the god rather than merely protection by the deity. Varieties included Dionysius, Isis/Osiris (from Egypt), Adonis and Mithraism. Typically these religions involved secrecy, sacrificial meals, spiritual ecstasy, and had reputations for immorality.
- Philosophical schools: The philosophies were the religions of the intellectuals. They concerned themselves with right and wrong, and teaching people how to live. (In this way, Christianity is probably closer to a philosophy than an ancient religion.) The three most common schools were:



*Marcus Aurelius sacrificing at the Temple of Jupiter*

- Stoics: This group believed the material world was governed by reason. They sought to renounce any dependence on anything beyond their control. Emotional detachment would allow them to be free of evil ways, enabling them to do good. The stoic is entirely self-centered and believes in self-sufficiency.
- Epicureans: This group was sometimes regarded as atheists. The entire aim of life was pleasure.
- Platonism: Originally from Plato (4<sup>th</sup> century BC), this group became the Gnostics (which is alive and well today). For them, the world was divided into two realms, the physical and the spiritual. And, the physical was transitory and irredeemably evil. The spiritual was unchanging and perfect. The goal, then, was to rid oneself of the body, so the eternal soul could enter eternal perfection.

### C. The Authorship

Romans itself claims Pauline authorship (1:1), and there has not been much controversy about it. Early church tradition affirms Pauline authorship. According to Geisler and Nix, it was either cited or alluded to by Clement of Rome (ca. AD 95-97), Polycarp (ca. 110-150), the Didache (ca. 120-150), Justin Martyr (ca. 150-155), Tertullian (ca. 150-220), and Origen (ca. 185-254). It has been named as authentic by Irenaeus (ca. 130-202), Clement of Alexandria (ca. 150-215), Cyril of Jerusalem (ca. 315-386), Eusebius (ca. 325-340), Jerome (ca. 340-420), and Augustine (ca. 400). And it was included in the canons of Marcion (ca. 140), Muratorian (ca. 170), Barococcio (ca. 206), Apostolic (ca. 300), Cheltenham (ca. 360), and Athanasius (367).



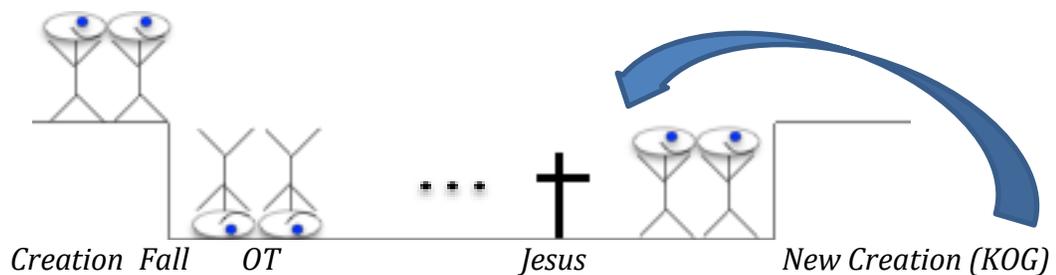
After Jesus, Paul is the most influential figure in Christianity. He is the author of thirteen New Testament Epistles, almost half of the New Testament documents, where he contextualizes, integrates and provides implications of the Gospel. Before meeting Jesus, Paul's life could be described as the preparation of the perfect instrument for God's work.

He grew up as Saul, a Hellenistic Jew in Tarsus of Cilicia (Acts 22:3; Phil 3:5), the fourth largest city of the Roman empire. He is a Roman citizen, is very familiar with Greek customs and Greek philosophical schools and is very sensitive to the issues involved in living as God's people in the pagan world (ie. eating idol food; living peaceable lives, etc). But, he is also a "Hebrew of the Hebrews, a Pharisee of the Pharisees

(Phil 3:5). He is therefore, thoroughly Jewish in his theological upbringing. His Old

Testament is the LXX, the Greek version of the Old Testament. Note all the Old Testament quotes and allusions in his writings. He studied under Gamaliel in Jerusalem (Acts 22:3), probably making him more liberal in his views compared to other authorities of the time. He could also vote in the Sanhedrin (Acts 26:10), meaning he was of a very high status. He was also known to be passionate and zealous for God. God prepared Saul to be the perfect instrument for his purposes.

His conversion experience, becoming Paul, was not a vision but was a resurrection appearance (1 Cor 15:3-11), even if “untimely.” This experience had profound implications on Paul’s theology. First of all, Jesus as Lord. In the Old Testament, the only person claiming Lordship is God. Yet, Paul says, “Who are you Lord?” Secondly, because it is a resurrection appearance, Ezekiel 37, the valley of dry bones, is being fulfilled. The end times have come! What Paul and the Jews expected at the end of time had happened in the middle of time.



Thirdly, Jesus has been resurrected meaning he has been vindicated by God. In other words, he was really who he claimed to be and the end times had come. Fourthly, since Jesus was who he claimed to be, Paul’s entire understanding of the Torah must be changed. Torah was no longer the center of life, Jesus was. Therefore, all of the Torah must be read in light of Jesus. Fifthly, the view of the cross must be changed. If God had vindicated Jesus who had died on a cursed tree, who is cursed? The cross is not weak and foolish, but God’s power and wisdom (1 Cor 1:18-25). And, sixthly, grace must become a major theme of faith. If God had called him, an active enemy, he could call anyone! Paul knows that he deserves nothing because he is the foremost of sinners (1 Tim 1:15). Therefore, in Paul’s letters, the Gospel holds prominence. Like a Christian King Midas, everything Paul writes and touches turns not to gold, but to Gospel. He takes real world situations and imbues all of it with the Gospel. It is for this reason we can view all of Paul’s writings not as propositional theology, but pastoral theology. This is all about grace, the heart and relationships.

As far as life after conversion, Paul went from Damascus to Arabia for some three years before returning to Damascus (Gal 1:14, Acts 9:20). He is forced to leave Damascus undercover on his way to Jerusalem. While in Jerusalem for two weeks, he meets with Peter and James (Gal 1:18). He then returns to Tarsus for around eleven years (Acts 9:30; 11:25; Gal 1:21). In the face of large numbers of Gentiles becoming believers, he meets up with Barnabas and ministered with him in Antioch (Acts 11:25-26). He then begins going on various missionary journeys to bring the Gospel to the Gentiles.



**D. The Missionary Journeys**

His first missionary journey is around 46-48. He travels from Antioch to Cyprus to Perga to Pisidian Antioch to Iconium to Lystra to Derbe and back (Acts 13-14). In Acts 15, Paul is in Jerusalem at the Jerusalem council (47-48?). Around 50-52, Paul sets out on his second missionary journey. He visits Tarsus, Derbe, Lystra, Pisidian Antioch, Troas, Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, Corinth, Ephesus, Caesarea and back to Antioch (Acts 15:35-18:22). While in Corinth, he writes two letters to the believers in Thessalonica. These are probably his first two letters.

Paul's third journey begins in Antioch in Acts 18:23 (54-57?). After traveling throughout the Mediterranean, he returns to Jerusalem only to be arrested by Roman soldiers (Acts 21:17-22:16).



*Paul's Third Missionary Journey*

Acts ends with Pauls' imprisonment in Rome for two years. He had finally made it to Rome! And, he was preaching the Gospel "will all boldness and without hindrance" (Acts 28:30-31). It is during this time-frame that it is thought that Paul penned the prison epistles: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon. In the Timothy letters, some of Paul's last, it appears he was released from that initial confinement. At the end of 2 Timothy, it appears Paul is imprisoned again in Rome and awaiting execution (2 Tim 4:11).

How did he die? No one is sure, but most everyone agrees that he was martyred. According to historical probability, it is likely he was beheaded under Nero's reign (AD 54-68). About 7-8 years after this letter arrives in Rome, the great fire of Rome happened (AD 64). Nero, emperor at the time, shifted the blame from himself to the Christians who he viewed as "a distinct human being (genus hominum) with a particular name (Christiani), and their numbers were large."<sup>3</sup> Nero then began a great persecution against the Christians. And, it is generally assumed that Paul and Peter are martyred under this persecution.

#### **E. The Date and Location**

It is thought that Paul wrote this letter in the mid-50s from the city of Corinth, while on his third missionary journey (54-57?). At the time, he was gathering an offering from the Gentile Christians for the church in Jerusalem (15:25; Acts 24:17).



*Remains of the Forum in Rome*

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 30.



*Corinthian Erastus Inscription*

In chapter 16, Paul mentions three people that help to identify the letter's composition with Corinth: Phoebe (16:1), Gaius (16:23), and Erastus (16:23). Phoebe was sent by Paul to the church in Rome as the bearer of the epistle. With her being from Cenchrea, she would have had ties to Corinth because Cenchrea is the port city for Corinth. In 1 Cor 1:14, Gaius is referenced as one who lived in

Corinth. Many have identified him as the Titius Justus in Acts 18:7. Erastus

was the city's treasurer (or director of public works). In Corinth in 1929, an inscription dated to the first century was discovered that refers to an Erastus as the city aedile (i.e., an official in charge of public works, etc.). There is debate over whether this is the same Erastus, but it could be.

#### **F. The Church in Rome**

It is unclear how the church in Rome originally began. The best explanation is that the Romans who were present at Pentecost (Acts 2:10-11) eventually made their way back to Rome and started a church in one of the synagogues. However, there are also other explanations. "All roads lead to Rome" was the popular saying that demonstrated the city's importance and accessibility. It should not be surprising that there was already an established church before Paul's arrival. People who may have heard the gospel in Asia, Greece, or elsewhere could have traveled to Rome. In Romans 16, Paul greets several people, with the most notable of these being Priscilla and Aquila. Both Aquila and Priscilla were in Rome until about AD 49 when Claudius expelled all the Jews from the city (Acts 18:2) on account of the "Chrestos disturbance." This phrase comes from a letter of Suetonius who says that "the Jews are constantly making disturbances at the instigation of Chrestos."<sup>4</sup> Although the word is "Chrestos" and not "Christos" (ie. Christ), it is assumed that this is a garbled reference to Christ, and the fact that the Jewish community is in discord over the preaching of Jesus. Paul met the couple when he came to Corinth (ca. AD 51). They did further ministry in Ephesus (Acts 18:19). They would have been permitted back in Rome after Claudius died in AD 54. But, it is highly likely that while they are not in Rome, the church there became predominantly Gentile. And, it is possible that after the Jews return, rifts begin happening between the different groups. But, Paul addresses both Jewish and Gentile believers in this letter (cf. 1:6, 7:1).

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 29.

## G. The Amanuensis

In 2 Cor 12:7, Paul refers to a "thorn in the flesh" which seems to be a reference to a physical ailment of some kind. The direct or indirect result of this ailment appears to have affected Paul's eyesight. Gal 4:15 states that the Galatian Christians would have given their own eyes to Paul if it were possible. Paul even had trouble recognizing the high priest in Acts 23. Because of these vision problems, Paul needed assistance in composing his letters, which necessitated the need for an amanuensis (i.e., a scribe). It appears that Paul had multiple amanuenses who wrote for him. The one he utilized for this letter was Tertius (16:22).

## H. The Audience

The apostle identifies his recipients in 1:7 by saying: *"To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints."* His intent was for the Christians in all of Rome to read the epistle. Additionally, it appears that there were multiple churches in Rome because there is made mention of an additional church in the home of Priscilla and Aquila (Rom 16:5).

## I. The Purpose



*Oldest Surviving Papyrus Fragment of Romans  
P<sup>46</sup>, Dates to 200 AD*

There are several views of the main purpose of Romans. Some think the main reason for the letter is to exhort unity within the church, especially between Jews and Gentiles. Paul's "law-free" Gospel had achieved a certain degree of notoriety which created issues with the Jewish Christians. Others think that the letter is written to address the need for an apostolic foundation. Romans is the only letter we have where Paul is writing to a church he didn't begin. Still others see Romans as a "carefully planned, doctrinal presentation of the Christian faith." Yet the epistle is lacking in such key elements of Pauline doctrine like eschatology, Christology, the Lord's Supper and church order. Others see a key reason being that Paul is seeking support from the Romans for his planned mission to Spain (Rom 15:23).

All of these probably are purposes for Paul's writing the letter. They certainly are themes in the letter (see below). But, which one is primary? We don't really know. Regardless of primary reason, it is clear that Paul has written a detailed letter explaining how God, in faithfulness to his covenant promises, has provided a way for both Jew and Gentile as the one people of God, through the obedient and trusting work of Christ, to enter life in the Spirit. **Here is the new humanity that will change the world.** As Raymond Brown says, "Longer than any other New Testament letter, more reflective in its outlook than any other undisputed Pauline letter, more calmly reasoned than Galatians in treating the key question of justification and the law, Romans has been the most studied of the apostle's writings... it is undisputedly Paul's theological masterpiece."

#### **J. The Form**

Recent scholarship sees some similarity between Romans and a diatribe (but there is debate). A diatribe is not a rant or a public speech. It is a pattern of formal teaching fit for a classroom. Fundamentally, it is a diplomatically presented discussion. The writer guesses to know some of the objections the readers will raise, so he/she sets up an interlocutor. This is an artificial person who raises questions to Paul's points. This style is not confrontational and comes across as very caring (ie. pastoral theology). With the Corinthian church which Paul has a relationship with, he can be very blunt. But, with the Roman church who he does not know, he has to be more careful.

#### **K. The Key Themes**

The Gospel: The greatest and most evident theme in the epistle, as in all of Paul's letters, is the subject of the gospel. Paul begins his letter by stating that he was called to be an apostle for the gospel's sake (1:1). Paul's dedication belonged to Christ and his gospel as he preached it with his whole heart (1:9). The gospel is also portrayed as the power of God unto salvation, able to save those who believe (1:16). This same gospel was not accepted by all the Israelites (10:16), yet graciously (and fortunately) includes the gentiles as well (15:16). God's righteousness is being revealed in this gospel from faith to faith (1:17). The only way this righteousness may be accessed is through faith, Sola Fide, by faith alone. Man can never make himself righteous, nor will a single ounce of merit do anything regarding salvation (Eph 2:8, 9). Paul adds to this and says that the one who is righteous by faith shall live (1:17). And this is his gospel which he develops throughout Romans.



Unity: And, this Gospel is for all people, Jew and Gentile alike. Unity seems to be quite an important theme. Theologically, it is quite possible that some Jews might view Paul as antinomian. On the other side, it appears that some Gentiles might want to use Paul's arguments against the Law to bash the Jews. Therefore, throughout the letter,

Paul walks a tightrope between affirming the goodness of the Law while showing that it is no longer binding on the believer due to the Gospel of Jesus. In a theme which is quite relevant today, how will Paul bind this multi-ethnic church together under the Gospel of Christ?

Future plans: Paul also wanted to inform the church regarding his future plans, because those plans would involve them. At the time of writing the epistle, Paul was about to take the offering that he had collected from various churches to the poverty-stricken church in Jerusalem. After that, he intended to visit the church in Rome for a time to preach the Gospel to them, then go westward to preach the gospel in Spain. In some ways, this sort of theme could be considered missional theology. Evangelism is driving his thoughts behind the words.

#### **L. The Invitation**

Therefore, I invite you, each week as part of our men's Bible studies, to imagine meeting

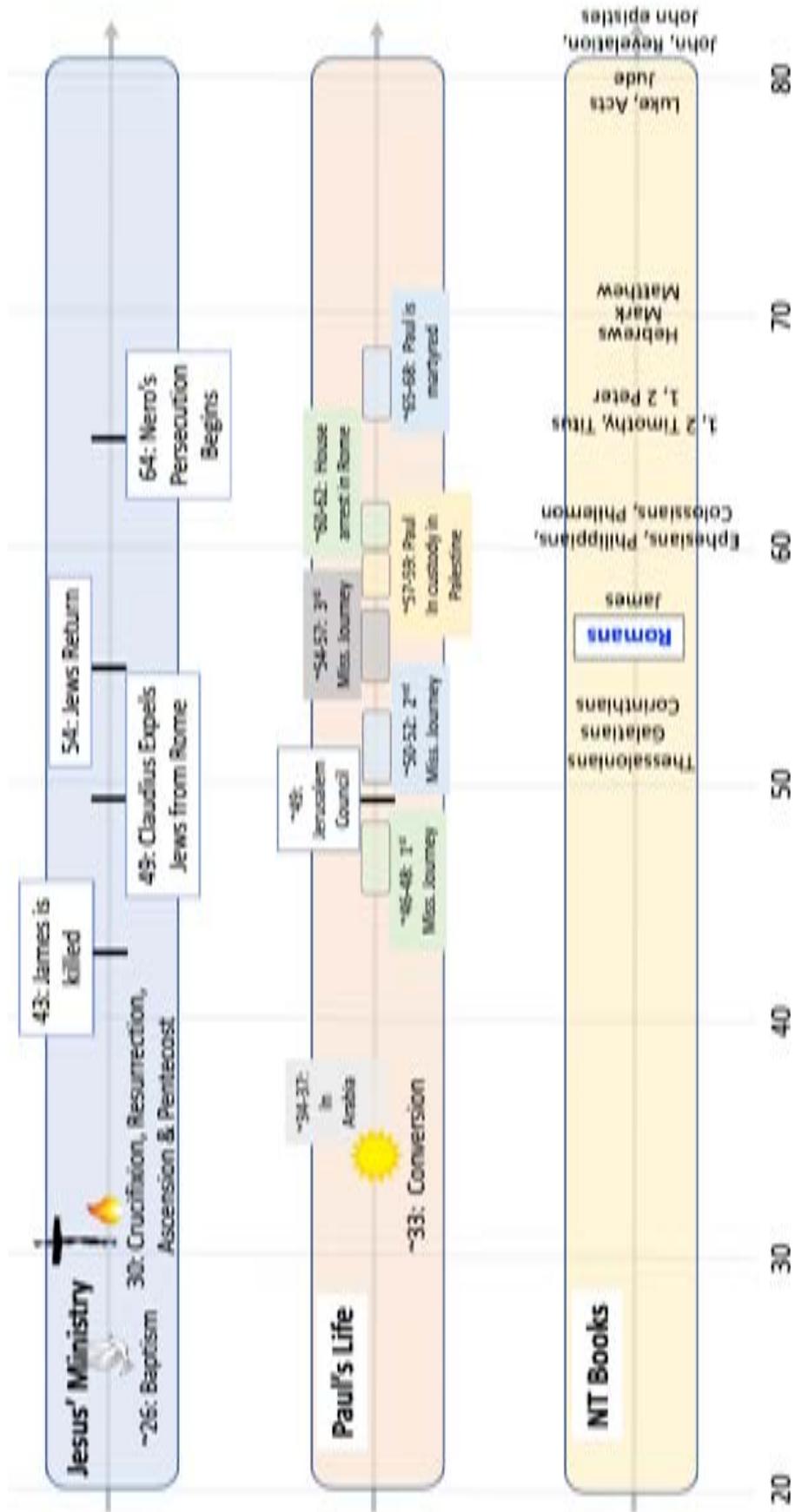
- ... in a cramped apartment,
- ... in the middle of the bustling city of Rome,
- ... in the midst of a pluralistic culture,
- ... surrounded by hopelessness and despair,
  
- ... and hearing Romans read,
- ... and discovering for the first time,
- ... the love of God,
- ... through Jesus Christ – which is –

## **THE GOOD NEWS FOR ALL PEOPLE.**



*Remains of an ancient Roman  
apartment building*

## IV. Approximate New Testament Timeline



## V. Outline of Romans

<b>I. Introduction: God's Good News &amp; Paul's Eagerness to Share It</b>	<b>1:1-17</b>
A. The Reasons for Writing	
B. The Thesis (16-17)	
<b>II. Sin: The Need for God's Righteousness</b>	<b>1:18-3:20</b>
A. The Guilt of the Gentile	1:18-32
B. The Guilt of the Jew	2:1 - 3:8
C. The Guilt of the Whole Human Race	3:9-20
<b>III. Salvation: The Gift of God's Righteousness</b>	<b>3:21-5:21</b>
A. The Description of God's Righteousness	3:21-31
B. The Illustration of God's Righteousness	4:1-25
C. The Benefits of God's Righteousness	5:1-11
<b>IV. Sanctification: The Demonstration of God's Righteousness</b>	<b>6:1-8:39</b>
A. Sanctification and Sin	6:1-23
B. Sanctification and the Law	7:1-25
C. Sanctification and the Spirit	8:1-39
<b>V. Sovereignty: The Plan of God's Righteousness</b>	<b>9:1-11:36</b>
A. Israel's Past: The Election of God	9:1-29
B. Israel's Present: The Rejection of God	9:30-10:21
C. Israel's Future: The Restoration by God	11:1-32
<b>VI. Service: The Application of God's Righteousness in Relationships</b>	<b>12:1-16:27</b>
A. Our Relationship to God	12:1-2
B. Our Relationship to Ourselves	12:3-8
C. Our Relationship to One Another	12:9-16
D. Our Relationship to our Enemies	12:17-21
E. Our Relationship to the State	13:1-7
F. Our Relationship to the Law	13: 8-10
G. Our Relationship to the Day	13:11-14
H. Our Relationship to the Weak	14:1 - 15:13
<b>VII. Salutations: The Providence of God in Paul's Ministry</b>	<b>15:14-16:27</b>
A. Paul's Purposes for Writing and His Apostolic Call	15:14-21
B. Paul's Plans for Traveling	15:22-33
C. Paul's Praise and Greetings	16:1-16
D. Paul's Warnings and Doxology	16:17-27

## VI. Getting into the Text

### A. Introductory Terms

#### 1. Revelation

- Why do we study the Bible?
  - To know the word or to know God?
    - ⇒ If our motivation is to know the Word, the result of our study will be **arrogance**.
    - ⇒ If our motivation is to know God, the result of our study will be **holiness**.
    - ⇒ JI Packer: “Once you become aware that the main business that you are here for is to know God, most of life’s problems fall into place of their own accord.”
- The Primary way which God has revealed/made himself known to us are:
  - Coming as a man in the person of Jesus
  - Through using people and communities to preserve a written record (The Bible) of his interaction with humanity in history
    - ⇒ Therefore, it is through the Bible that we get to know God.

#### 2. Inspiration

- Inspiration is the idea that God was involved with producing the Bible
  - How did inspiration happen?
    - ⇒ God working through men who lived in a specific place and time. Just as Jesus was both man and deity and those natures cannot be denied him without distorting the Biblical picture of Jesus, so the Word is both the product of God and man, and must also be held in that tension.
  - What are the implications of the dual nature of the Bible?
    - ⇒ The Bible is divine in nature and thus has implications for how we should understand our relationship with God, the world we live in and how we behave.
    - ⇒ Also the human aspect of the Bible requires that we take the context of the Biblical author and audience seriously. Since God worked through people and place to record his word, if we are to understand what is being communicated to us, we must first understand what the original author intended the original reader to understand. **The Bible cannot mean what it never meant.**
    - ⇒ In short the Bible has implications for us today, but we must first understand what it meant when it was originally written.

### 3. Pre-knowledge/Presuppositions

- We all bring information, attitudes and ideologies that influence how we understand and interpret the Bible.
  - Are these presuppositions helpful or harmful?
    - ⇒ They are helpful when they are shaped by a Biblical worldview.
    - ⇒ They are harmful when they are shaped by a non-Biblical worldview.
  - How then do we make sure our interpretations are not being shaped by a non-biblical worldview?
    - ⇒ By developing a **method** that points us to the original authors original meaning of the text.

### 4. Exegesis and Hermeneutics

- Biblical exegesis seeks to establish the right method and practice for discerning what the text meant to its inspired author and to set forth, in an intelligent way, the results of that enterprise.
  - Exegesis is the process of discovering what the text meant to the original author.
  - Eugene Peterson: “Exegesis is an act of love. You love the writer so much that you want to get their words right.”
- Biblical hermeneutics seeks to discover the contemporary relevance of biblical text.
  - What does the biblical text mean to me right here and right now (So What?).
  - Ie. How can I obey this text today?

## B. Context and Content

*The key to good exegesis is the ability to ask the right questions of the text in order to get at the author's intended meaning. Good exegetical questions fall into two basic categories: questions of **content** (what is said) and of **context** (why it is said).*

– Gordon Fee

### 1. The Question of Context

- **Historical Context** – the historical context of a Biblical book or passage includes:
  - Who wrote it and to whom?
  - Where was the author and audience geographically: Corinth, Sinai or Israel?
  - When was it written: 55 AD or 455 BC?
  - Why was it written?
  - What are the religious, political and social factors that will determine the original authors meaning and the original readers understanding?
    - ⇒ Often this is a one-time thing. Once you've asked these questions of a biblical book you don't need to ask them again.
  
- **Literal Context** – demands that we ask questions like:
  - How does this text fit in with the rest of the book? the rest of the Bible?
  - Why is this story in this place in the book?
  - What's the point?
    - ⇒ Why is the creation story in Genesis repeated twice?
    - ⇒ Why do we have Oracles to the nations in a prophetic work in Amos?
    - ⇒ Why does Matthew begin his gospel with a whole chapter on genealogy?

## 2. The Question of Content

- **You have to know the text well, so...**

- Read the text carefully.
- Re-Read the text carefully.
- Re-Re-Read the text carefully.
- As you are reading, pray over it to ask the Holy Spirit to lead you through the text.

- **Method:**

- **We like to use the Inductive Method at PBCC.**
- **This involves**
  - ⇒ **Observation:** What does the passage say?
  - ⇒ **Interpretation:** What does the passage mean?
  - ⇒ **Application:** So what? How does this passage apply to my life?

- **Observation (What does the passage say?)**

- Divide the text into paragraphs and title each paragraph.
  - ⇒ Paragraphs have cohesion and progression of thought.
  - ⇒ English texts have already done this for you.
- Observe the basic facts of the text, both the obvious and the hidden.
- Note repetition of:
  - ⇒ Words/phrases
  - ⇒ Topics/themes
- Also take note of:
  - ⇒ Theological loaded words: those words which are theologically loaded words like hope, righteousness, love, grace, etc. These words have become so familiar to us that we often cannot define them, but they often hold the secret to understanding Pauline texts.
  - ⇒ Difference-making words: words that clearly make a difference in the meaning of the passage and whose meaning may be ambiguous.
  - ⇒ Similarities/contrasts
  - ⇒ Similes/metaphors
  - ⇒ Poetry
  - ⇒ OT quotes/allusions.

– **Structure (extra credit):**

⇒ **Analytical Outline (AO)**

- A grammatical outline of the passage to see how the text fits together
- A private aid to help read the text carefully and ask the right questions.
- The goal is to more easily see the grammatical relationships which helps to see the progression of the text.
- **Steps**
  1. **Divide the text into paragraphs (you've already done this)**
    - + Work on one paragraph at a time and find the thought flow.
  2. **Place the main clause and any direct commands at left margin.**
    - + Do this even when the main clause isn't until several verses into the passage. In this case, the sub-clauses are indented above the main clause.
  3. **Put dependent words under words they modify.**
    - + Clauses and phrases often begin with conjunctions (for, but, because, that), pronouns (who, which), with prepositions (with, by) etc.
    - + Usually it is more difficult to identify the word these phrases modify.
  4. **Arrange parallel phrases in parallel.**
    - + Although the NT is in Greek, the Hebrew heritage is there. A distinctive trademark of Hebrew literature is the use of parallelism.

Ex. Eph 2:21-22

*In whom the whole building    being fitted together is growing    into a holy temple    in the Lord;  
In whom you also                    are being built together                    into a dwelling of God    in the Spirit;*

- **Interpretation (What does the passage mean?)**
  - Considering your observations, now dig deeper.
  - Write the main thought of the passage in one sentence (maybe two).
  - Research any word or theme from the text. At this point, study resources and commentaries may help in your understanding of the passage.
    - ⇒ How does it fit into the larger context of Philippians?
    - ⇒ How does it fit into the larger story of the Bible?
  
- **Application (So what?)**
  - Be practical in your application of the passage.
    - ⇒ **What truths (about Him, the Gospel, life, etc.) do you think God is trying to convey to you through this text?**
    - ⇒ If I take this passage seriously, the difference it will make in my life is \_\_\_\_\_.
    - ⇒ Pray that the Holy Spirit, who is with you, will lead you to act on what he taught you through this text.

## VII. Study Sheet

Title: \_\_\_\_\_  
Romans 1:1-6

Observation (what does the text say?)	
Text	Notes
<p><u>1</u> Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called <i>as</i> an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, <u>2</u> which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures, <u>3</u> concerning His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh, <u>4</u> who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord, <u>5</u> through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about <i>the</i> obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for His name's sake, <u>6</u> among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ;</p>	<p>Title: _____</p>
	<p>Title: _____</p>
<b>Repeated Words/Themes</b>	
<b>Theologically Loaded Words</b>	
<b>Difference Making Words</b>	

<b>Other Observations</b>	
<b>Analytical Outline / Structure</b>	
<b>Interpretation (What does the text mean?)</b>	
Write the main thought of the passage in 1-2 sentences.	
How do the key words, topics or themes fit into the larger context of Romans.	
How do the key words, topics or themes fit into the larger story of the Bible.	
<b>Application (How might this text apply to me?)</b>	
What truths (about Him, the Gospel, life, etc.) do you think God is trying to convey to you through this text?	
If I take this passage seriously, the difference it will make in my life is:	
Pray that the Holy Spirit, who is with you, will lead you to act on what he taught you through this text. Write your prayer.	

## Sample Analytical Outline (AO)

### I. (Title) Introductory Comments about Paul and the Gospel

1 Paul,  
a bond-servant of Christ Jesus,  
called *as* an apostle,  
set apart for the **gospel** of God,

2 which He promised beforehand  
through His prophets  
in the holy Scriptures,

3 concerning His Son,  
who was born  
of a descendant of David  
according to the flesh,

4 who was declared the Son of God  
with power  
by the resurrection from the  
dead,  
according to the Spirit of holiness,  
Jesus Christ our Lord,

## VIII. Recommended Books/Commentaries

- Paul for Everyone: Romans (Ch 1-8), Tom Wright \$13.49
- Paul for Everyone: Romans (Ch 9-16), Tom Wright \$12.59
- Romans (Tyndale), F.F. Bruce \$17.00
- The Message of Romans (BST Series), John Stott \$24.16
- Romans (Story of God), Michael Bird \$24.49
- Romans: The NIV Application Commentary, Douglas Moo \$30.99
- Romans (Zondervan Exegetical Commentary) \$35.34

### **Note the philosophy behind these studies:**

- The goal is for everyone to do the studies each week, while the facilitator changes each week.
- The more you put in, the more you'll get out (as with everything in life).