

# Romans

## Introduction

### I. Sources

#### A. Douglas J. Moo

1. Reformed New Testament scholar.
2. Academic career: Trinity Evangelical Divinity School (Illinois) and Wheaton College Graduate School (2000–2023).
3. Education: Ph.D., University of St. Andrews, Scotland.
4. Research interests: Romans and related topics.

#### B. Richard Longenecker

1. Education: B.A. and M.A. degrees, Wheaton College. Ph.D., New College, University of Edinburgh.
2. Over fifty published articles in scholarly journals.
3. Seminary textbook

#### C. John Warwick Montgomery

1. Eleven degrees in philosophy, librarianship, theology, and law.
2. Distinctions from Cornell University, University of California (Berkeley), Wittenberg University, University of Chicago, and Cardiff University.
3. Lutheran.
4. Passed away in September 2024.

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5. Emphasizes verse by verse - BUT - never lose sight of the themes

## D. Mike Wenger

1. Calvary Chapel Costa Mesa, now full time teacher on youTube
2. Emphasis on theological coherence and importance of recognising the holistic structure of Scripture.
3. Viewing sentences, paragraphs, and chapters in their thematic unity.

## E. Karl Barth *The Epistle to the Romans*

1. 6 editions. Jokes that next edition will be his obituary. A life's journey of exploration.
2. It was a challenge to the liberal theology of the time
3. Barth, while emphasizing God's revelation, argued that Scripture is not itself revelation but a witness to revelation in Christ - many see it as undermining the sufficiency and absolute authority of the Bible
4. Cover of time magazine April 1962 "In the 20th century, no man has been a stronger witness to the continuing significance of Christ's death and Christ's return than the world's ranking Protestant theologian, Swiss-born Karl Barth"

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## II. Occasion and Timing of Writing

A. Written during Paul's third missionary journey from Corinth (c. 54–55 AD).

1. Most likely written prior to any of the 4 Gospels!

B. Key reasons for writing his letter to Rome:

1. Not a corrective letter like Corinthians or Galatians. But it is a letter:

a) Romans as a letter written in the context of a real historical situation that therefore must be read as reflecting the occasional character of a real letter and the dialogical nature of its circumstances. Exhortation to the believers in Rome.

b) Keep in mind that Paul is writing a letter, not a systematic theology. He anticipates objections and counters them systematically. He frames his arguments as a legal defence of the Gospel. Do not assume everything is ok between you and God.

c) We may accept or refuse the message, but we may not change it.

2. Summarising the Gospel in an essay-like format.

3. Addressing the Judaizer-Gentile discussion.

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a) Expulsion of Jews by Emperor Claudius in c.41 - 49AD.  
Some Jews returned but the majority of the church when Paul wrote most likely Gentile. But they were confused - are we less than the Jews? Do we need to obey the law?

4. A clear move to plant the Gospel in the center of Europe & the center of power

C. Paul was introducing himself to a church that he had neither founded nor visited. He wanted to establish his credentials as an apostle with a worldwide commission to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ.

1. He hopes to enlist as supporters of an evangelistic campaign in the western Mediterranean. Spain

D. The longest of Paul's letters (7,114 words)

1. Features approximately 60 Old Testament quotations, second only to Hebrews with ~80

### III. Impact of Romans

A. Instrumental in the Reformation

1. Summation of the Gospel's foundational truths
2. Catalyst for revivals due to its theological clarity.

B. Martin Luther:

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1. *“Deserves to be studied daily, the more you learn it the more precious it becomes.”*
2. *“We find in this letter, the richest possible teaching about what a Christian should know.”*
3. *“St. Paul, in writing this letter, wanted to compose a summary of the whole of Christian teaching.”*
4. *“Whoever takes this letter to heart possesses the light and power of the Christian message.”*

C. John Calvin wrote:

1. *“When anyone understands this Epistle, the whole of Scripture is opened to them.”*

D. Augustine

1. He regretted that he had never completed a commentary on Romans, but said: *“the transforming effect of the epistle was written large on every aspect of my life.”*

E. Karl Barth:

1. Romans emphasised foundational Christian doctrines, though critiqued for aspects of liberalism. “You are a sinner on earth

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and the righteous God (*the righteousness of God*) is in heaven - bridging that gap is the theme of Romans!

#### IV. **Theme 1:16-17 righteousness of God - the gospel - salvation by faith in Jesus Christ - not ashamed - GH - righteous not religious**

#### V. **Four key *Therefore*s**

A. Four key ***THEREFOREs*** in Chs 2, 5, 8 and 12. ***Therefore*** -

Literally means "for that reason". ***Therefore*** hinges the depth of the riches of the theology just presented by Paul of what God provided to us in the gospel - to how we now prove to the world that this is good and perfect and acceptable will of God so that they want to know this same Lord Jesus that we do!

1. The first ***therefore*** is Ch 2 “Therefore you are inexcusable, O man” Romans 2:1 - All are under condemnation due to sin.
2. The second ***therefore*** is Ch 5 a transition where theology starts to become a bit more practical - How the theology is put into practice. Peace. Anxiety and loneliness.  
Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 2 through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Romans 5:1

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- a) **Anxiety** is considered a major issue in Western society today, being classified as the most common mental illness, affecting a significant portion of the population, with many experiencing symptoms that can significantly impact their daily lives; according to statistics, around 1 in 5 adults in the United States are affected by anxiety disorders.
  - b) **Loneliness** is considered a significant and growing issue in Western society today, with recent reports from the U.S. Surgeon General classifying it as a "public health epidemic," affecting roughly half of American adults and causing serious concerns about its impact on mental and physical health; younger adults often report the highest rates of loneliness.
3. The third **therefore** in chapter 8 leads to the monumental conclusion that there is no condemnation. Guilt/shame  
"There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit." Romans 8:1
- a) **Guilt and shame** are considered a significant issue in Western society today, with concerns rising about a

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potential shift from a "guilt culture" to a more pervasive "shame culture" due to factors like social media, public shaming, and the increased focus on personal image, leading to potential mental health impacts like depression and anxiety when these emotions are not managed effectively; however, the extent of this issue varies depending on individual experiences and cultural nuances within Western societies.

4. The fourth **therefore** in chapter 12 introduces the whole aspect of practical Christian Living.

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.' Romans 12:1-2

Lack of a public christian testimony is due to:

- a) Failure to grasp power of Romans 12:1-2
- b) Secularism - Pressure to conform to societal norms
- c) Moral Relativism - Truth is seen as subjective
- d) Fear of Judgment by coworkers and acquaintances

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- e) Materialism
  - f) Hypocrisy & Institutional Failures - Scandals within churches and Christian leaders
  - g) Fear of Persecution
5. Christian life based on theology - doctrine matters. Similar to 10 commandments. Relationship with God comes first - then with men.
  6. If you read 12 forward you would say I've got no ability to do this. That's because you missed everything from 1-11. If you read one through 11 only, you would say this is great theology, but "so what"!

## VI. Cultural & Historic Context

- A. Rome's significance - Centre of political and intellectual power. An ideal location for presenting the Gospel's universal relevance.
  1. DC, NYC, LA, London all rolled into one city.
- B. "The worship of the emperor is for Paul and his missionary preaching was a social reality." Hearing the claim that "the good news is JESUS, is LORD" would have prompted the life threatening question from others "You mean to say Caesar is not?" and "You have just one God!"

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1. Power of Rome - people would think “Wow your Savior is from a hill county - some town called Nazareth. Our gods are:”
  - a) Jupiter (protector of the state)
  - b) Juno (protector of women)
  - c) Minerva (goddess of craft and wisdom)
  - d) Mars (god of war)
  - e) Mercury (god of trade and messenger of the gods) and
  - f) Bacchus (god of grapes and wine production)

## C. Stoicism

1. Their gods didn't really guide their lives - but stoicism did.  
Importance of stoics and influence
2. The philosophy emphasized the importance of self-control, rationality, and virtuous living.
3. Stoics believed that human beings are distinguished by their capacity for reason. The proper use of reason - understanding the world as it is and acting in accordance with nature. Not in accordance with the ***Righteousness of God***.
4. Stoicism was highly influential in ancient Rome, particularly among the elite, military leaders, and philosophers, though it also resonated with common citizens including slaves (you can see why - live in harmony with your position in life). It

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provided a practical guide to ethics, resilience, and duty, making it appealing in a society that valued discipline and civic responsibility.

5. Seneca, a philosopher and advisor to Emperor Nero, and Marcus Aurelius, who wrote *Meditations*, a cornerstone of Stoic thought.

## D. Homosexuality

1. Romans did not categorize sexuality in terms of homosexuality or heterosexuality, but rather in terms of active (dominant) and passive (submissive) roles.
2. Same-sex relations were common, especially between older men and younger men, even boys (pederasty)
3. A freeborn Roman male was expected to be dominant in all aspects of life, including sex. Being the receptive partner in same-sex relations was seen as shameful for an elite man.

E. Prostitution: Widespread and legal, with brothels, street prostitutes, and high-class courtesans. Unlike adultery, using prostitutes was not seen as morally wrong for men.

F. Divorce: Common and relatively easy, particularly among the upper classes. Either spouse could initiate divorce without legal complications.

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G. Gladiatorial and Public Spectacles: Violence and entertainment, including gladiator games and public executions, were seen as normal aspects of Roman life.

H. Slavery: Considered a normal part of society. Slaves had little to no legal rights but could sometimes gain freedom.

I. Persecution

1. Persecution of Christians in Ancient Rome began in the 1st century AD, but it wasn't a consistent, empire-wide policy from the outset. Instead, it was sporadic and often localized. They were viewed as subversive, insurrectionists, loyal to a foreign power or foreign god.
2. The first signs of tension between the early Christians and the Roman authorities likely appeared shortly after Jesus' crucifixion (circa 30 AD). The Christian movement was seen by some Roman authorities as a strange sect of Judaism, and their refusal to worship Roman gods, including the emperor, led to suspicion and hostility.
3. The earliest mentions of formal persecution - Emperor Nero (54-68 AD). Nero, likely seeking to deflect blame for the fire, blamed Christians, who were already viewed with suspicion by the Roman population and Nero used them as scapegoats. He

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subjected them to brutal punishments, including crucifixion, burning alive, and being torn apart by wild animals in public spectacles.

4. Persecution then once again became more sporadic and localized under subsequent emperors. Trajan issued a policy that Christians should not actively be sought out but if they were denounced and refused to renounce their faith, they were to be executed.
5. The most intense and systematic persecution occurred during the reign of Emperor Diocletian (303-311 CE) to eradicate Christianity. Ordered the destruction of Christian churches and scriptures, the imprisonment of clergy, and required all Christians to make public sacrifices to the Roman gods or face execution.

J. Paul speaks to the Christians of his age in Rome. And the context of Rome is remarkably similar to the context of western society today. But as an Apostle Paul also speaks to all down through the ages. To you and me!

K. As we begin:

1. Our intellect needs to be engaged to understand Romans. But also illumination of the Holy Spirit.

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2. We want to see the context to help us to understand and apply the message of ARomans.
3. Karl Barth tells us that those who would “hunger and thirst after righteousness” will inevitably be drawn to Romans - “the righteousness of God.”
  - a) Romans 1:17 – “For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith.’”
  - b) Romans 3:5 – “But if our unrighteousness demonstrates the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unjust who inflicts wrath? (I speak as a man.)”
  - c) Romans 3:21 – “But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets.”
  - d) Romans 3:22 – “Even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference.”
  - e) Romans 10:3 (twice) – “For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God.”

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4. Paul was writing from Corinth:

- a) “Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the *gospel* which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures,” **1**

**Corinthians 15:1-4**

## VII. Outline of Romans

### A. Introduction: The Gospel of God

(1:1–17)

1. Greeting and Theme of the Gospel (1:1–7)
  - a) Paul as a servant and apostle, called to proclaim the Gospel of God.
  - b) The Gospel centers on Jesus Christ, the Son of God, promised in the Scriptures. Highlighted as this is the foundation to the Letter - Jesus the Christ - Son of God.

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2. Paul's Desire to Visit Rome (1:8–15)
  - a) Paul expresses gratitude for the faith of the Roman believers.
  - b) His obligation to preach the Gospel to both Jews and Gentiles.
3. The Theme of the Letter (1:16–17)
  - a) God's righteousness - "The righteous shall live by faith" which is the power of the Gospel for salvation to all who believe.

## B. God's Righteousness Revealed in Condemnation (1:18–3:20)

1. The Universal Problem: God's Wrath Against Sin (1:18–32)
  - a) Gentiles are under condemnation for suppressing the truth and idolatry.
2. The Moralist and the Jew Condemned (2:1–3:8)
  - a) Both are without excuse. The law reveals sin but cannot justify.
3. The Universal Guilt of Humanity (3:9–20)

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- a) "None is righteous, no, not one" - all have sinned and fall short of God's glory.

## C. God's Righteousness Revealed in Justification (3:21–5:21)

1. Justification by Faith Alone (3:21–31)
  - a) Righteousness apart from the law through faith in Jesus Christ. The cross was the demonstration of God's justice and mercy.
2. Abraham as the Example of Faith (4:1–25)
  - a) Justification by faith was exemplified in Abraham, prior to circumcision, not by works or law.
3. THEREFORE (5:1–11)
  - a) The Results of Justification
  - b) Peace with God
  - c) Access to grace
  - d) Hope in the glory of God.
4. The Comparison of Adam and Christ - the First and Second Adam (5:12–21)

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- a) Adam brought sin and death; Christ brings God's righteousness and life.

## D. God's Righteousness Revealed in Sanctification (6:1–8:39)

1. Freedom from Sin's Dominion (6:1–23)
  - a) Believers are united with Christ in His death and resurrection. Sin no longer reigns; righteousness becomes the new master.
2. Freedom from the Law's Condemnation (7:1–25)
  - a) Law appears 74 times in this letter - all other NT letters combined 47 times.
  - b) The law exposes sin but cannot save. The struggle with sin remains, but victory is found in Christ.
3. Life in the Spirit (8:1–17)
  - a) No condemnation for those in Christ Jesus. The Holy Spirit empowers believers to live for God.
4. Celebration of the Hope of Future Glory (8:18–39)
  - a) Assurance of God's love and eternal security in Christ.

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## E. God's Righteousness Revealed in the Sovereign Election - "What about Israel?" (9:1–11:36)

1. God's Sovereign Choice (9:1–29)
  - a) Election is based on God's mercy, not human effort or will. God's justice in choosing some and hardening others.
2. Human Responsibility and Israel's Unbelief (9:30–10:21)
  - a) Israel stumbled over the stumbling stone (Christ)
  - b) Salvation comes through faith, not work.
3. God's Faithfulness to Israel (11:1–36)
  - a) A remnant of Israel is saved by grace. The inclusion of Gentiles and the future restoration of Israel.

## F. God's Righteousness Revealed in Transformation (12:1–15:13)

1. A Living Sacrifice (12:1–2)

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- a) Presenting oneself to God in worship through transformed living.
2. Gifts and Service in the Body of Christ (12:3–8)
  - a) Humility and unity in exercising spiritual gifts.
3. Love and Christian Conduct (12:9–21)
  - a) Loving others sincerely and overcoming evil with good.
4. Submission to Authorities (13:1–7)
  - a) Obedience to governing authorities as instituted by God.
5. Love as the Fulfillment of the Law (13:8–14)
  - a) Love one another; live in light of Christ's return.
6. Christian Liberty and Unity (14:1–15:13)
  - a) Avoiding judgment and encouraging weaker believers.  
Living in harmony to glorify God.

## G. Closing: Paul's Ministry, Greetings, and Doxology (15:14–16:27)

1. Paul's Missionary Intentions (15:14–33)
  - a) His desire to preach where Christ has not been named.
2. Final Greetings and Exhortations (16:1–23)
  - a) Commendation of co-laborers in the Gospel.

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## 3. Doxology (16:25–27)

- a) Glory to God for the revelation of the mystery of the Gospel

VIII. Now - Let's embark on our joyful journey of discovery. Discovery about the righteous God of heaven and discovery about yourself!

- A. God needs men who grasp the depths of Scripture and challenge the heart - not boys full of catch-phrases that tickle the ears.