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This session we begin a study on the book of Romans. This book is an epistle (letter) that was written by Paul the apostle, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. It is considered the greatest, most thorough presentation of Christianity ever written. In the Bible, it is the first (sequentially, not chronologically) of the 13 epistles known to be written by Paul, written from Corinth near the end of his third missionary journey (ca. AD 56).

Rome was the capital and most important city of the Roman Empire. It had been founded in 753 BC, but is not mentioned in Scripture until NT times. The rise of the Roman Empire had taken place during the latter part of the intertestamental period (the period of approximately 400 years between the OT and the NT). The Roman Empire appears to represent the fourth world empire described in Daniel's prophecy (Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Greek, and Roman).

Paul (originally known by the Hebrew name Saul) was a Jew from the tribe of Benjamin (Phil 3:5), and was also a Roman citizen (Acts 16:37, 22:25). He was born in Tarsus (Acts 9:11). Like his father, he was a Pharisee (Acts 23:6). He had studied Judaism under the celebrated rabbi Gamaliel (Acts 22:3). The Lord miraculously called him while he was on the road to Damascus to continue his brutal persecution of Christians. For the rest of his life, he was used greatly by the Lord. He was responsible more than any other individual for the spread of Christianity throughout the Roman Empire, and wrote much of the NT.

Romans is a letter of very rich doctrinal and practical instruction. It teaches the great truths of the gospel of the grace of God. It is primarily a work of doctrine, and contains the most thorough systematic presentation of Christian theology in Scripture.

Chapters 1-11 present the theological truths, while chapters 12-16 detail the practical outworking of those truths. Correct practices must be built on the foundation of truth.

Some of the major truths covered in Romans include God's righteous wrath and judgment against sinful mankind (Ch. 1-2), the universality of sin among mankind (Ch. 3), justification by faith alone (Ch. 3-4), the security of salvation (Ch. 5), the transference of Adam's sin and of Christ's righteousness (Ch. 5), sanctification (Ch. 6-8), God's sovereign election (Ch. 9-10), God's plan for Israel (Ch. 11), spiritual gifts and practical godliness (Ch. 12), the believer's responsibility to human government (Ch. 13), and principles of Christian liberty (Ch. 14-15).

The book of Romans answers many basic questions, including: What is the gospel? (Ch. 1); Why do people need it? (1:18-3:20); Does it agree with OT Scripture? (Ch. 4); What are the benefits of justification? (Ch. 5); Does salvation by grace permit sinful living? (Ch. 6); What is the relationship of the Christian to the law? (Ch. 7); How is the Christian enabled to live a holy life? (Ch. 8); Has God broken his promises to the Jews? (Ch. 9-11); How should believers respond to the gospel in their everyday lives? (Ch. 12-16)

We could never fully explore the depths of this book, but an understanding of Romans gives much enlightenment when it comes to knowing God and His plan for us. The study of Romans offers plenty of potential growth and understanding, whether to a new Bible student or a mature biblical scholar. It will offer us opportunities for many thoughtful discussions in our journey to better know God.

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- 1) To you, what is the Bible?
- 2) What do you think are the best reasons to study the Bible?
- 3) How does your understanding of the Bible impact how you live your life?

Romans 1

Greeting and Introduction

¹ Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called to be 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 Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed (a descendant) of David according to the flesh, ⁴ and declared to be the Son of God with power by His resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness.

⁵ Through Him we have received grace and apostleship to call people from among all nations to obedience to the faith for His name's sake.

⁶ And you also are among those who are called to belong to Jesus Christ.

⁷ To all who are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints:

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

Paul's Desire to Visit Rome

⁸ First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, because your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.

⁹ For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the preaching of the gospel of His Son, that without ceasing I mention you continually in my prayers, ¹⁰ asking that by God's will, at last now the way may be opened for me to come to you.

¹¹ For I long to see you, that I may impart some spiritual gift to you, so that you may be strengthened, ¹² that is, that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith.

¹³ I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that I have often planned to come to you (but was hindered until now), so that I might harvest some fruit among you, as well as among the other Gentiles.

¹⁴ I have an obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish.

¹⁵ So, as much as is in me, I am ready and eager to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome.

The Just Live by Faith

¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

¹⁷ For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed through faith that leads to more faith. As it is written, "The just shall live by faith."

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Memory Verse for the Week

Psalms 14:1(a) The fool says in his heart, "There is no God."