

THE GOSPEL

PAUL'S EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS

A STUDY OF THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS

Every follower of Christ should take advantage of whatever opportunity they are presented with to read Paul's Epistle to the Romans. It is this Epistle, more than any other, where the "Gospel" is explained. Down through the centuries, the Epistle to the Romans has literally changed the course of human history as it has gripped the lives of world changing leaders. It is my hope that as we study this Epistle together, your name will be added to the list of people whose lives have been gripped and changed by this Epistle. This happened to me when I was 15. It was while I was reading the Epistle to the Romans that I was introduced to the Saviour and His offer of salvation. This was a Saviour I embraced and a salvation I gladly accepted.

Paul had not yet been to Rome. But he intended to visit them. Before he arrived he wanted them to understand the *Gospel* he preached and then the reasons this demanded that the follower of Christ live differently to those in the world. As you read Romans you will notice that the first 11 chapters are "doctrine" and the the remaining 5 chapters are practical lifestyle instruction that result from this doctrine.

I hope you can see why this Epistle was (and is) a *courageous* Epistle. Paul faced hostility from Rome *and* Jerusalem. Nearly everything in this Epistle addresses those who were hostile to the Gospel. But rather than attacking these sources of hostility directly, Paul exposes the lies of those attacking the Gospel by clearly expounding the truth about man's condition, the emptiness of religion, God's solution through Jesus, who the people of God are, and how followers of Christ must now live.

BACKGROUND



The Apostle Paul wrote to the Romans around 57AD while he was still in Corinth. This epistle was his introduction to the Roman believers of what he taught. The church in Rome was probably started after pilgrims to Jerusalem, on the famous Day of Pentecost, returned to Rome. At the time, Rome was the centre of the world ruled by an Emperor (Caesar Nero) who would go on to martyr tens of thousands of Christians and eventually, the apostle Paul (in

64AD).

KEY VERSE

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

Rom. 1:16

AUDIENCE

The Church at Rome was made up of converted Jews, and some Gentiles (Rom. 1:13). Because the church probably started with returning Pentecost pilgrims, it had a particularly Jewish flavour to it. This is why Paul cites Old Covenant prophets, characters, verses, and expressions throughout this epistle. It's also why he discusses the significance of *Israel* in chapters 9, 10 and 11. The church at Rome was probably organised into house churches led by people of whom many were known to Paul (we can see this in the last chapter of this epistle)

APPLICATION

In this opening chapter there is a foundation laid which will lead directly to Paul's "Therefore" in Romans 12:1. Paul states that God is the Creator and as such has a right to be worshiped and obeyed. It is the response of the one who has been transformed by the power of God to render to God appropriate worship not just in praise but also in conduct. Thus, this opening chapter will contrast what happens when people refuse to worship their Creator and the kind of destructive conduct which results.