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OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK OF ROMANS

At the end of his third missionary journey, around the year 57 A.D., Paul was about to leave for Jerusalem before going on to Spain. He was taking the financial offering collected from the Gentile churches of Macedonia and Achaia to the poor Christians in Jerusalem. A woman named Phoebe was going to Rome and it is likely that Paul made use of the opportunity to send this letter with her. Paul longed to spend time with the Roman Christians and he let them know that he intended to visit them. The church there consisted of both Jewish and Gentile Christians. Although we don't know why Paul recorded such an extended explanation of the doctrines of the Christian faith, there are several possibilities. It seemed proper to have a written explanation in case he was killed before he reached Rome, or it could have been a way to introduce himself to them in a manner which highlighted his identity and purpose as an apostle.

The Jews believed that the Mosaic Law bound the believers to the will of God. Therefore many Jewish Christians insisted that Gentiles who wanted to become Christians, first had to be circumcised and keep the Law of Moses. The question whether a Gentile could be a Christian without becoming a Jewish proselyte first was one of the great problems of the time. Paul desired to unite the Jews and Gentiles in the Roman church and to establish the Roman church firmly in the gospel.

Paul's main point in Romans is that sin alienates man from God. No man is righteous before God; all are alike under sin. A person's justification before God rests on the mercy of Christ and not on the Law of Moses. It is not a matter of law at all, because no person can ever fully live up to God's Law. Man is justified solely because Christ, in his mercy, forgives his sins. A person's standing before God depends not on what the person has done or can do; rather, it is based completely on what Christ has done for him. Therefore, Christ is entitled to absolute devotion and obedience. Paul exhorts his readers to fulfill the duties of obedience to which Christians are called.

The importance of this book of the Bible
has been summarized
by Martin Luther:

“It is a light and way into the whole Scriptures.”

***The book of Romans can be divided into the following sections.
This division has also been used for grouping the questions.***

Introduction (1:1 - 17)

The sinfulness of the Gentiles (1:18 - 32)

The sinfulness of the Jews (2:1 - 3:8)

The sinfulness of all people (3:9 - 20)

Justification by faith alone (3:21 - 31)

Abraham justified by faith (4:1 - 25)

Benefits of justification (5:1 - 11)

Christ the new Adam (5:12 - 21)

Sin's dominion broken (6:1 - 23)

Struggling with sin (7:1 - 25)

Living by the Spirit (8:1 - 39)

God's sovereign election (9:1 - 29)

Israel's unbelief (9:30 - 10:21)

The remnant of Israel (11:1 - 10)

Warnings and encouragement for Jews and Gentiles (11:11 - 36)

Life in the body of Christ (12:1 - 21)

Life in the world (13:1 - 14)

Weak and strong Christians (14:1 - 15:13)

Paul's vision for the ministry (15:14 - 22)

Paul's plan to visit Rome (15:23 - 33)

Final greetings, warnings and doxology (16:1 - 27)

INTRODUCTION

¹Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God-- ²the gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures ³regarding his Son, who as to his human nature was a descendant of David, ⁴and who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord. ⁵Through him and for his name's sake, we received grace and apostleship to call people from among all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith. ⁶And you also are among those who are called to belong to Jesus Christ.

⁷To all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

⁸First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is being reported all over the world. ⁹God, whom I serve with my whole heart in preaching the gospel of his Son, is my witness how constantly I remember you ¹⁰in my prayers at all times; and I pray that now at last by God's will the way may be opened for me to come to you.

¹¹I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong-- ¹²that is, that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith. ¹³I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that I planned many times to come to you (but have been prevented from doing so until now) in order that I might have a harvest among you, just as I have had among the other Gentiles.

¹⁴I am obligated both to Greeks and non-Greeks, both to the wise and the foolish. ¹⁵That is why I am so eager to preach the gospel also to you who are at Rome. ¹⁶I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. ¹⁷For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith."

1. Who was the author of the Letter? _____
2. When and where was it written? _____
3. To whom was it written? _____
4. Why did Paul write it? _____
5. What is Paul's attitude toward being a servant? (v. 1)

6. How do we understand the word “called” used in verses 5, 6 and 7?

7. Was the authority of the apostolic office different from the authority of the offices of minister, elders and deacons? If so, how?

8. What reasons does Paul give for wanting to go to Rome? (vv. 11 – 15)

9. What is the main message of the letter as shown in verses 15 and 16?

10. What does Paul mean when he writes that salvation is for the Jews first?
(v.16)

11. What is meant by “the righteous will live by faith”? (v. 17) How did this verse change Luther’s life?
