

# Romans

- **Author**

- Paul's name is attached to it in 1:1, and the contents of the letter are very consistent with our knowledge of Paul's mind and ministry. Unanimous opinion of ancient and contemporary biblical scholars that this was composed by Paul.
- It is noteworthy that Saul/Paul belongs to the tribe of Benjamin.
  - Benjamin was first named Benoni by Rachel ('son of my sorrow'). She gave birth to him with much pain. It was Jacob who later changed his name to Benjamin ('son of my right hand'). The Church gave birth to Paul with great pain and sorrow, but then later he becomes it's 'right hand'.
  - Prophecy of Jacob regarding Benjamin is most relevant to the life of Paul, "*Benjamin a ravenous wolf, in the morning shall eat the prey, and in the evening shall divide the spoil*" (Genesis 49:27).
  - It is Saul of the tribe of Benjamin who pursues David to kill him, but is converted by the mercy of David who had an opportunity to kill Saul and did not take it. Interesting parallel in Saul/Paul pursuing our Lord's church, "*Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me*" (Acts 9:4).

- **Date**

- Probably towards the end of the third missionary voyage (Acts 18:23-21:16). Most likely written in late AD 57 or early AD 58 in Corinth.

- **Destination and Purpose**

- Writing in advance of his planned trip to Rome. Kind of a letter of recommendation. He wants to preempt any detractors that might try to slander him or misrepresent his doctrine. He had many enemies by then.
  - The care Paul has taken in composing the letter with both literary style and careful doctrinal exposition indicates the importance of the church in Rome.
- Wanting to rally support for his missionary efforts to Spain and hopefully use Rome as a staging area for this. (15:23-24)
- Many Gentiles with Greco-Roman names are mentioned in the closing of the letter, which indicates that the majority of the church in Rome was of gentile origin, but there was obviously a significant Jewish component as well. There were more than a dozen synagogues in Rome at the time (estimated 40-50,000 Jews in Rome in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century).

- Paul seems to be trying to ease tensions between Christians of Gentile and Jewish origin. Pride was at the root of the controversy, and Paul attacks the problem at its roots.

- **Structure**

- A mature work of Paul's later years after two decades of apostolic efforts and reflection on the mysteries of the faith. It is a dense theological work that can be difficult to work through at times as he touches on so many profound themes in rapid fire succession. It is helpful to be reminded of Peter's words, "*Our most dear brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, hath written to you: as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are certain things hard to be understood, which the unlearned and unstable wrest, as they also do the other scriptures, to their own destruction.*" (2 Pet 3:16)
- Basic outline
  - Prologue 1:1-15
  - Salvation in Christ 1:16 - 8:39
  - Restoration of Israel 9:1 – 11:36
  - Christian living 12:1 – 14:23
  - Epilogue 15:1 – 16:23

- **Themes**

- The grace of salvation is a gift for all mankind received through obedient faith in Jesus Christ.
  - Faith and Charity are essentially linked.
  - Language of 'belonging' to Christ, or being his 'slave' (1:1; 1:6).
  - Saved by grace and not by works of the law (i.e. circumcision (2:29)).
- Flesh and Spirit (7-8)
- Adam (5:15); and Abraham (4:1ff).
- Suffering and perseverance (2:6; 8:17-18).
- No distinction between Jew and Gentile (9-11).
- Paul stresses need to be humble and non-judgemental (2:1-3).
- Emphasizes unity amongst believers (12:18; 16:17).