

Lesson 1

Introduction to the Epistle to the Romans

INTRODUCTION

Lesson 1 introduces the Epistle to the Romans by exploring its background, audience, and purpose. The Apostle Paul wrote to believers in Rome to preach the gospel of Christ—not only as the message that saves sinners but also as the power of God that establishes and strengthens saints. This lesson traces Paul’s personal relationship with the Roman believers, his desire and hindrance to visit them, the reason he wrote instead, and the way the letter provides a foundation for the believer’s faith and growth. The session closes with Paul’s four-fold outline of Romans, showing how the gospel of Jesus Christ is the foundation for justification, sanctification, dispensational understanding, and the Christian walk.

LEARNING GOALS

By the end of this lesson, students should be able to:

- Explain why Paul wrote the Epistle to the Romans and to whom it was written.
 - Describe what it means to be a “believer” in the Pauline sense.
 - Understand that the gospel is not only for unbelievers but also for the continued edification of believers.
 - Identify the historical and personal context of Paul’s writing—including his hindrances and desire to visit Rome.
 - Recognize that the Book of Romans provides the foundation for the believer’s faith and growth.
 - Outline the four major divisions of Romans (Justification, Sanctification, Dispensational Identity, and Walk).
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KEY IDEAS

- Paul’s epistle is addressed to believers, “the called of Jesus Christ,” “beloved of God,” and “called to be saints.”
- The gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation for the lost and the power of God for sanctification of the saved.
- Paul wrote to preach the gospel in greater detail—laying out the full implications of Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection.

- His hindrance in coming to Rome led him to write the letter, turning his absence into a blessing for all believers.
 - Romans establishes believers in foundational doctrine—the “spiritual gift” that grounds them in Christ.
 - The outline of Romans follows a fourfold foundation:
 1. **Justification in Christ** (Chs 1–5)
 2. **Sanctification in Christ** (Chs 6–8)
 3. **Dispensational Identity in Christ** (Chs 9–11)
 4. **Walk in Christ** (Chs 12–16)
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LECTURE OUTLINE

I. The Objective of the Lesson

- To introduce the Epistle to the Romans
- To understand the outline and flow of the entire letter
- To grasp the personal and historical context surrounding its writing
- To see how the gospel serves as both foundational and establishing truth for believers

Romans 1:1–7; 1 Corinthians 15:1–4; Romans 16:25–27

II. The Epistle Written to Believers

A. Identification of the Audience

- The letter is written to those already saved — “the called of Jesus Christ,” “beloved of God,” and “called to be saints.”
- These are people who have believed from the heart that form of doctrine delivered to them (Romans 6:17).

B. The Definition of a Believer

- A believer is one who has obeyed from the heart the gospel — responding in faith to the doctrine of Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection.
- Justified by faith and at peace with God (Romans 5:1).
- Like Abraham, righteousness is imputed through belief in the God who raised Jesus from the dead (Romans 4:23–25).

C. Believers as the Beloved of God

- Those who believe are accepted in the Beloved (Ephesians 1:6).
- In Christ, believers share in His identity as the Beloved Son.

Romans 1:5–7; Ephesians 1:6

III. The Purpose of Writing: Preaching the Gospel to Believers

A. The Gospel for the Saved

- Paul's aim: "to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also" (Romans 1:15).
- The gospel is not only for the lost, but also the power of God to establish those already saved.
- Paul's gospel teaching expands the believer's understanding of justification, sanctification, and identity in Christ.

B. The Power of the Gospel

- To the unsaved: it is "the power of God unto salvation" (Romans 1:16).
- To the saved: the preaching of the cross remains "the power of God" (1 Corinthians 1:18).
- Romans gives the details and implications of the gospel in full.

C. The Gospel Message Summarized

- *"Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again the third day according to the Scriptures."* (1 Corinthians 15:3–4)
- Romans expands this message into a doctrinal structure for Christian life.

IV. The Background and Historical Context

A. Paul's Hindrance and Desire

- Paul had long desired to visit the believers at Rome, but had been repeatedly hindered (Romans 1:13).
- His apostleship to the Gentiles required ministry in many regions first (Romans 11:13; 15:15–24).
- Despite his absence, Paul wanted them to think rightly about his ministry and care for them.

B. His Heart Toward the Believers

- Paul thanks God for their faith, which is known throughout the world (Romans 1:8).
- He continually prays for them, seeking a prosperous journey to come unto them (Romans 1:9–10).
- His "prosperity" is defined spiritually — success in ministry and fruit in others' lives.

C. The Reason for Writing

- Unable to visit, Paul writes to preach — the written epistle serves as his spoken ministry in absence.
- His desire: to impart a spiritual gift that they might be established (Romans 1:11).

Romans 1:8–13; Romans 15:22–24

V. The Purpose and Effect of the Epistle

A. The Spiritual Gift Imparted

- The “spiritual gift” is not a miraculous sign, but the doctrinal foundation laid by the gospel.
- The intended result: establishment — to make believers stable, grounded, and fruitful in Christ.

B. The Establishing Power of the Gospel

- Romans 16:25–26: God is able to “stablish you according to my gospel.”
- The foundation laid by Paul points to Jesus Christ as the cornerstone (1 Corinthians 3:10–11; Ephesians 2:19–20).
- The gospel not only saves but structures the believer’s understanding of God’s purposes.

C. Paul’s Future Ministry

- Though hindered, Paul anticipated coming “in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ” (Romans 15:29).
- His later prison epistles (Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians) reveal that fullness — building upon the Romans foundation.

VI. The Doctrinal Framework of Romans

Paul structures the epistle like a foundation with four stones; each centered on Christ:

1. **Justification in Christ** – *Romans 1–5*
 - How the sinner is made righteous before God by faith.
 2. **Sanctification in Christ** – *Romans 6–8*
 - How the justified believer walks in newness of life through the Spirit.
 3. **Dispensational Identity in Christ** – *Romans 9–11*
 - Understanding Israel’s place and the believer’s standing in God’s plan.
 4. **Walk in Christ** – *Romans 12–16*
 - The practical outworking of the gospel in Christian life and service.
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REFLECTION & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Before the Video

Prepare your mind and heart by considering:

1. What comes to your mind when you hear “the gospel”? Do you see it as something only for the lost—or also for believers?
2. How might understanding *to whom* and *why* Paul wrote Romans change how you study it?

3. Think about how relationships affect communication. Why would it matter that Paul had never yet been to Rome?
 4. What personal expectations do you bring to studying Romans?
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During the Video

As you listen and take notes, reflect on these questions:

1. What does Paul mean by the term “believer”, and how does he define it from Romans 5–6?
 2. Why does Paul preach the gospel to those already saved?
 3. What reasons does Paul give for his delay or hindrance in visiting Rome?
 4. How does Paul’s apostleship to the Gentiles shape his desire to write?
 5. What is the “spiritual gift” Paul longed to impart, and what effect was it meant to have?
 6. In what ways does Paul’s writing itself serve as his method of preaching in absence?
 7. Note the fourfold outline of Romans—how do these divisions reflect the believer’s full experience in Christ?
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After the Video

Engage deeper with what you’ve learned:

1. Why is it significant that Romans is written to believers rather than unbelievers?
 2. How does the gospel continue to work as “the power of God” after one is saved?
 3. Reflect on times when God has used a hindrance in your life to bring about spiritual fruit.
 4. What truths from Paul’s introduction help establish your own foundation in Christ?
 5. How can understanding the four divisions of Romans shape your approach to Christian living?
 6. In one sentence, summarize why Paul wrote Romans and what he hoped to accomplish.
 7. How does this lesson prepare you to study the doctrinal content in the coming sessions?
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ROMANS COURSE | LESSON 1 REVIEW QUIZ

1. Who was the book of Romans written to?
 - a. Unbelievers in Rome
 - b. Jews in Rome
 - c. Gentiles in Rome
 - d. Believer in Rome
2. What is the main purpose for Paul writing to the believers in Rome?

- a. To preach the gospel of Christ to them
 - b. To boast of his labor in the Lord
 - c. To communicate he would never come to them
 - d. To explain he was not an apostle of the Gentiles
3. Why does Paul say he was hindered from coming to Rome?
- a. His own laziness
 - b. The people he wrote to were really not Christians
 - c. He was let hither to and has had fruit among other Gentiles
 - d. None of the above
4. What are the first two sections (foundation stones) of the book of Romans?
- a. Romans 1-3 and Romans 4-8
 - b. Romans 1-2 and Romans 3-8
 - c. Romans 1-6 and Romans 7-8
 - d. Romans 1-5 and Romans 6-8
5. What are the last two sections (foundation stones) of the book of Romans?
- a. Romans 9-12 and Romans 13-16
 - b. Romans 9-11 and Romans 12-16
 - c. Romans 9-14 and Romans 15-16
 - d. Romans 9-13 and Romans 14-16