

# FREE AT LAST!

## The Book of Romans

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**Note:** The following are the pastor's notes used in preaching this message. This is not a complete, word-for-word transcription of what was preached. These notes serve as a companion to the complete message, which is available by listening to the audio version. Bible quotes are primarily from NASB.

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Martin Luther King Jr.'s speech – August 23, 1963 on steps of Lincoln Memorial – anticipated the day when he could say “Free at last, free at last, thank God almighty I'm free at last.” – Freedom from American tragedy of slavery – Romans – freedom from greater slavery

Key to Romans – written by a man who realized he had been rescued from the pit of hell – not by his merit – but by grace – anyone who has experienced knows the feeling – it's like takeoff on plane – when wheels leave the ground you are free!

### I. REVELATION – Romans 1:1-17 – many critical doctrines

#### A. The messenger – Romans 1:1

Romans 1:1 – “*Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God...*” – bond-servant – Exodus 21 – slave could be set free in six years – but he might not want to enter the harsh world where he had to work his own crops – some loved their master – taken to tabernacle – lobe or ear pierced – permanent – “*apostle*” – one sent with a message

Paul – Jew originally named Saul, after the first king of Israel, and, like his namesake, was of the tribe of Benjamin (Philippians 3:5) – circumcised – sent to Jerusalem at 13

- Born in Tarsus (Acts 9:11), a prosperous city in Turkey - center of Greek learning and culture, the home of one of the three most outstanding universities in the Roman Empire.
- Trained as a Jewish rabbi – both in Tarsus and probably in Jerusalem under Gamaliel – the grandson of Hillel – most famous rabbi of all time – he was called “the beauty of the Law.” Saul was therefore learned both in Greek literature and philosophy and in rabbinical Law.
- Father was Roman citizen and a Pharisee (Acts 23:6) – had best of both worlds – Greco-Roman citizenship and Jewish pedigree as a Pharisee – totally committed to the Law
- Persecuted Christians – Acts 8:3 – he “...*began ravaging the church, entering house after house; and dragging off men and women, he would put them in prison.*” – Acts 9:1 - Saul was “...*breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord...*”
- Struck him down on road to Damascus – Acts 9:3-4 – light from heaven – “’...*Saul, Saul why are you persecuting Me?*’” – saved!
- God saved him! – Acts 9:15 – “...*he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel...*”
- Began preaching – escaped to Nabatean desert for three years – received doctrine he taught directly from the Lord during this time – Galatians 1:11-12 – “*For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.*”
- Acts 13 – left on first missionary journey – preached and established churches throughout Asia Minor
- Galatians 2 – after ministering for 14 years went to Jerusalem for Jerusalem Council – affirmed gospel to Gentiles
- Paul then served on two more missionary journeys

Paul wrote Romans at the close of his third journey (56 A.D.) from Corinth – church was formed from those who had been at Jerusalem for Pentecost (Acts 2:10) – they had never received Apostolic teaching

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## B. The message – Romans 1:1

Radical new message – Romans 1:1 – Paul was “...*set apart for the gospel of God . . .*” – what is that? – it’s not imagination – not a political platform – not the result of intellectual reasoning – not the best to come out of the leading universities – not cultural adaptation.

Romans 1:16 – “*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.*”

The gospel saved a reluctant Pharisee named Paul - a fisherman named Peter – a tax collector named Matthew – an Italian cop named Cornelius – kings, princes, rich, poor, every language, every tribe – and it saved me! – Christianity has not spread through politics or armies – through economic gain – through education – it has spread through a personal encounter with the gospel!

## C. The method – Romans 1:2

Romans 1:2 – This person was “...*promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures...*” – Jesus was prophesied at the very least 400 years before He came – at the very most 1400 years before He came:

- Genesis 3 – He would deliver the final fatal blow to Satan
- Leviticus – His provision and covering for sin is prophesied in every detail of the Tabernacle and the offerings brought to it
- Psalm 22 – method of His death through crucifixion
- Isaiah 7 – born of a virgin
- Micah 5:2 – the little village where He would be born

Over 332 prophecies given in the Old Testament concerning the coming Messiah – most fulfilled at the first coming – astounding!

## D. The means – Romans 1:3, 4

The gospel comes through Jesus – the embodiment of the gospel – people sometimes try to make Jesus an ethereal creature, much like a fabricated fable – Greek language is very precise —Jesus was “...*born of a descendent (spermatozoon) of David. . .*” – lit. “He was born *out of* the sperm of David according to the flesh” – Jesus’ legal father, were descendants of David – He had the right to take His place on the throne and establish a physical kingdom

Romans 1:4 – “*who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the spirit of holiness . . .*” – “*declared*” = *horidzo* (horizon) – the declaration of Jesus as God is as clear as the horizon

## E. The motivation – Romans 1:8-15

Paul expresses his thanks for their faithfulness (Romans 1:8-10) – and his desire to encourage and edify – Romans 1:11-14

Romans 1:15-17 – true motivation – preach the gospel – Romans 1:15, 16 – “*So, for my part, I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome. 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.*” – Many don’t believe this today – think you have to use music, videos, persuasion – can’t offend

1 Corinthians 1:20-21 – “*Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not*

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*come to know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.”*

In September 386 A.D. man in North Africa – professor in Milan Italy – sat in the garden of his friend Alypius, crying over his sinful life – leaving his friend – went far enough away where he could weep openly – fell down beneath a fig tree and began to sob, “How long O Lord, how long? Tomorrow and tomorrow? Why not now? Why not this very hour make an end to my uncleanness?” – suddenly heard a child from the neighboring house singing, “Tolle, lege. Tolle, lege” – “Pick it up, and read it” – “So damning the torrent of my tears, I got to my feet, for I could not but think that this was a divine command to open the Bible and read the first passage I should light upon.” – found a Bible – fell open to Romans 13:13-14 – “*Not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts.*” – put it down – “I wanted to read no further, nor did I need to. For instantly, as the sentence ended, there was infused in my heart something like the light of full certainty and all the gloom of doubt vanished away.” – Alypius confessed the same thing – told his mom – Aurelius Augustine – became one of the church’s great leaders and theologians.<sup>1</sup>

**II. REPROBATION – Romans 1:18-3:20** – “reprobate” – only in Psalm 16:4 – “to despise, reject” – heart of every man – most offensive doctrine – yet only one you can prove

**A. The cycle of sin – Romans 1:18-32**

The cycle of sin:

- Romans 1:18-20 – truth suppressed – “no excuse”
- Romans 1:21 – God not honored
- Romans 1:21 – Heart is darkened
- Romans 1:22 – became fools
- Romans 1:24-32 – given over to their sin – idolatry (Romans 1:24-25) – degrading passions (Romans 1:26-27) – depraved mind (Romans 1:28)

**B. No partiality – Romans 2:1-29**

No partiality – Romans 2:1-11 – Universal dictates of conscience – Romans 2:14-15 – “*For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves, in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them...*”

**C. Universal guilt – Romans 3:1-8**

Jewish advantages – Romans 3:1-18 – they had the law – yet there is universal helplessness and hopelessness – Romans 3:9-20 – Romans 3:10-12 – “*...There is none righteous, not even one; There is none who understands, There is none who seeks for God; All have turned aside, together they have become useless; There is none who does good, There is not even one.*”

- Universal application – none seeks God
- Universal ignorance – no one understands
- Universal apathy – no one seeks God
- Universal disobedience – all turn aside
- Universal uselessness – all have become useless
- Universal amorality – none does good

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<sup>1</sup> St. Augustine, *The Confessions* (repr., 401 AD, Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 2008), 159-160.

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Dr. Donald Grey Barnhouse said, “Man stands before God today like a little boy who swears with crying and tears that he has not been anywhere near the jam jar, and who with an air of outraged innocence, pleads the justice of his position, in total ignorance of the fact that a good spoonful of the jam has fallen on his shirt under his chin and is plainly visible to all but himself.”<sup>2</sup>

Romans clarifies this further:

- Suppresses the truth – Romans 1:18
- Ignores his conscience – Romans 2:14-15
- Universal depravity – Romans 3:10-11
- Hostile toward God – Romans 8:7
- Not able to obey God – Romans 8:7-8
- Romans 7:18 - *"For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the wishing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not."*

Reprobation = depravity of man – does not mean:

- Man is as sinful as he could be
- He has committed every sin – some have tried!
- He has no innate knowledge of God – has a conscience
- He can't possess virtuous character and actions

Depravity does mean:

- The inherent corruption extends to every part of man – to all the faculties and powers of both soul and body
- There is no spiritual good, in relation to God, in him

We are all radically ruined – morally corrupt at our roots.

Rosaria Butterfield – example of sexual sin – “What good Christians don't realize is that sexual sin is not recreational sex gone overboard. Sexual sin is predatory. It won't be “healed” by redeeming the context or the genders. Sexual sin must simply be killed. What is left of your sexuality after this annihilation is up to God. But healing, to the sexual sinner, is death: nothing more and nothing less. I told my audience that I think that too many young Christian fornicators plan that marriage will redeem their sin. Too many young Christian masturbators plan that marriage will redeem their patterns. Too many young Christian internet pornographers think that having legitimate sex will take away the desire to have illicit sex. They're wrong. And the marriages that result from this line of thinking are dangerous places. I know, I told my audience, why over 50% of Christian marriages end in divorce: because Christians act as though marriage redeems sin. Marriage does not redeem sin. Only Jesus himself can do that. The audience seemed a little shocked to hear this.”<sup>3</sup>

### III. RECONCILIATION – Romans 3:21-5:21

God had to do something – and He did! – Romans 5:11 – “...we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.” – “reconciled” = financial term – “change or exchange” – result? – “set free” – Jesus reconciled our spiritual bank account – set us free from spiritual debt!

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<sup>2</sup> Donald Grey Barnhouse, *Expositions of Bible Doctrines Taking the Epistle to the Romans as a Point of Departure*, Volume 2, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1953), 190.

<sup>3</sup> Rosaria Champagne Butterfield, *The Secret Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert: An English Professor's Journey Into Christian Faith*, (Pittsburgh, PA: Crown & Covenant Publications, 2012), 83.

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## **A. The source of righteousness – Romans 3:21-31**

Romans 3:21-24 – *“But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus...”* – “redemption” = ransom price – Jesus paid it

## **B. The example of righteousness – Romans 4:1-25**

Romans 4:2, 3 – *“For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? ‘Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.’”*

## **C. The blessings of righteousness – Romans 5:1-11**

Romans 5:1, 2 – *“Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God.”*

Romans 5:6 – *“...while we were still helpless . . .”* – Romans 5:8 – *“while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.”*

## **D. The imputation of righteousness – Romans 5:12-21**

Romans 5:12-21 – death came through Adam – Romans 5:13 – *“...sin is not imputed when there is no law.”* – but there is law – condemns us – Romans 5:18 – but *“...through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men.”* - we enter life with sin credited to our account – through belief in Jesus, His righteousness is credited to our account – 2 Corinthians 5:21 – *“He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”*

A thousand years after Augustine, Martin Luther discovered the imputation of righteousness – thought he could live up to it by being a priest – plagued by sin – “I greatly longed to understand Paul’s Epistle to the Romans, and nothing stood in the way but that one expression, “the righteousness of God,” because I took it to mean that righteousness whereby God is righteous and deals righteously in punishing the unrighteous. ...Night and day I pondered until ... I grasped the truth that the righteousness of God is that righteousness whereby, through grace and sheer mercy, he justifies us by faith. Thereupon I felt myself to be reborn and to have gone through open doors into paradise. The whole of Scripture took on a new meaning, and whereas before “the righteousness of God” had filled me with hate, now it became to me inexpressibly sweet in greater love. This passage of Paul became to me a gateway to heaven.”<sup>4</sup>

## **IV. RESURRECTION – Romans 6:1-8:39**

### **A. Dead to sin – Romans 6:1-6**

Romans 6:5-7 – *“For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin.”*

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<sup>4</sup> Barend Klaas Kuiper, *Martin Luther: The Formative Years* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1933], 198–208.

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## B. Alive to Christ – Romans 6:8-23

Romans 6:8 – *“Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him...”* – Romans 6:11 – *“Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.”*

That’s our position – but in practice it’s different – Romans 6:12, 13 – *“Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.”* – We were slaves of sin – now we are slaves of righteousness – so don’t go back to the law

## C. The flesh and the Law – Romans 7:1-25

Paul explains the failed work of the law – can’t save – explains why we struggle though alive in Christ - We are alive in Christ, but we still live in the flesh - The Law will kill you – Romans 7:11 – *“for sin, taking an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me.”*

Law in inverse reactions – Romans 7:15 – *“For what I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate.”* – Romans 7:19 – *“For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want.”*

Who sins in you? – Romans 7:17 – *“So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me.”* – Romans 7:20 – *“But if I am doing the very thing I do not want, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me.”*

## D. No condemnation! – Romans 8:1-39

Romans 8:1 – *“Therefore there is now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.”* – Magna Carta of Christian life! – we are saved, but still walk in the flesh – explains difference between the flesh and the spirit – Romans 8:6-8 – *“For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.”*

But life in the Spirit brings freedom – Romans 8:28 – *“And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.”*

Romans 8:29-30 – Chain of salvation – *“For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.”*

Romans 8:31-39 – God’s commitment to us

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## V. RECOGNITION – Romans 9:1-16:27

### A. A national example – Romans 9-11

Paul then provides national example of righteousness:

- Love for the Jews – Romans 9:1-5
- God’s elective choice – Romans 9:6-33
- Calling on the Faith and salvation – Romans 10:1-21
- Israel will be saved – Romans 11:1-36

Sweeping expanse for a prodigal people

### B. Personal example – Romans 12-16

In personal service – Romans 12:1-21

- Through spiritual gifts – Romans 3-13
- Through a heart of service – Romans 14-21
- In response to government – Romans 13:1-14
- In principles of conscience – Romans 14
- In self-denial – Romans 15

Conclusion – Romans 16:1-27 – friends – thanks

Bad week at home – stove, dishwasher, washer, drier, car – all broke down! – got them fixed – some think that’s all life is – temporary breakdowns – worse – your whole house burned to the ground and the earth swallowed it up and you with it! – no hope!

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What would most people say is man’s biggest problem?
2. What is the significance of Romans 3:21-28?
3. What is the significance of Romans 8:1 in light of Romans 7?
4. What is true for the believer according to Romans 8:28-34?
5. How are we to live our lives according to Romans 12:1, 2?
6. What truth in Romans are you most thankful for?