

Why You Should Fall in Love with Romans

Romans 1:1-7

INTRODUCTION: The word Bible means a book of documents. The Bible comprises **66** individual documents. **39** in the Old Testament and **27** in the New Testament. Today, we are shifting from an Old Testament book - **Genesis** to a New Testament book, **Romans**. This shift is significant not only because they are historically very far apart but also because they are in completely different literary genres.

One of the most important questions to ask when studying any book of the bible is to which genre does it belong? Followed by the second most important question - what rules apply to understanding this particular genre of literature?

- **Genesis**, for example, was a *historic narrative* - it is simply a historic account of events. As such, it is pretty straightforward.
- **Romans** is an *epistle of Paul*. What is an epistle? An epistle is the wife of an Apostle. No, I'm sorry - an epistle is simply a letter.

There are 8 Major Categories of Genres in the Bible - Law → History → Wisdom → Poetry → Prophecy → Gospels → Epistles → Apocalyptic. Each genre has its own rules of interpretation.

This is one of the reasons people struggle when trying to read through the Bible in a year - the bible begins with historical narrative, *Genesis, Exodus*, then... it makes a major shift to Legal Ease in *Leviticus*. If you do not learn the interpretive norms of LAW, you will find yourself quite confused.

ILLUSTRATION: It would be akin to reading a newspaper, applying the same rules for interpretation to an editorial, as to the classifieds, then again to the comics. Shifts must be made if we are to understand what the author intended to communicate.

Narrative vs. Epistle: Key Genre Rules

1. Authorial Intent and Address

- **Genesis** was written *to a community finding its identity* — Israel needing to know who they are, where they came from, and who their God is. It answers questions the audience didn't always explicitly ask.
- **Romans** was written *to a specific congregation with specific problems* — Jew/Gentile tension, questions about Israel's future, the nature of righteousness. Paul is answering questions clearly on the table.

2. Descriptive vs. Prescriptive

- **Genesis** *describes* what happened — it doesn't always endorse it. Abraham lying about Sarah is recorded, not commended. The narrative expects you to evaluate it against the broader canon.
- **Romans** is largely *prescriptive* — Paul is making direct theological and ethical claims intended to govern belief and behavior.

3. How Meaning is Carried

- **Genesis** carries meaning through *plot, character, repetition, type-scenes, and structure*.
- **Romans** carries meaning through *argument and assertion*. Paul builds a logical case. Vocabulary, conjunctions (*therefore, but now, for*), and rhetorical questions are your exegetical handles.

4. The Role of the Narrator

- **Genesis** has a narrator who tells you what God said and did — often without explaining why. The silence is most significant. You're meant to sit with ambiguity.
- **Romans** has Paul, an *Apostle* who tells you exactly what he thinks and why.

5. Application Moves Differently

- **Genesis**: The path to application runs through *theological reflection on the story as a whole* — what does this reveal about God, humanity, covenant, and redemption? You don't jump straight from narrative to imperative.
- **Romans**: Application is often closer to the surface, but still requires asking *what problem Paul was solving* before universalizing his solution.

It is helpful to remember: **epistles interpret narratives; narratives illustrate epistles.** Romans will tell you what Genesis *means* theologically. Genesis will show you what Romans *looks like* in flesh and blood.

Lest you think I am overstating the importance of GENRE, it may help to recognize that both the Old and New Testaments are organized by Genre. For example, in the New Testament, we find:

Gospels → What Jesus did

Acts → The founding of the Early Church

The Letters of Paul → Instruction in life and doctrine for the church. Within the Pauline Epistles, we find two major divisions: Letters to Churches and Letters to Individual People.

Letters To Churches (longest to shortest)

Letters To Individuals (Pastoral and Personal):

General Letters → Letters from other Apostles organized by Author.

Revelation → Where history is headed

NOW - today we begin the study of ROMANS. In many ways, Romans is the interpretive key to the entire Bible.

It is a Pauline Epistle. In other words, it was a letter written by Paul.

Who was Paul? He was one of 13 Apostles that Jesus Christ personally called to give oversight and instruction to the Church. The word **Apostle** simply means “Messenger”. There is a sense in which we all bear the message of Christ and can be considered (lower case “a”) apostles. But this is the proper title of an office of the Church (Capital “A”) Apostle - these were unique men with a unique mission, and they were *clothed with immense authority*.

Preeminent among the Apostles was the author of Romans - Paul. The majority of the New Testament was written by Paul. Other than Jesus Christ, perhaps no man has had a greater effect on Western Culture than Paul the Apostle. Among the works of Paul, no work has had so great an effect as this letter of Paul to the Romans.

If I were to ask you to name the most pivotal figures in all of church history, three names would tower above the rest: **Augustine, Martin Luther, and John Wesley**. Church history was different before they lived than after they died. Everything turned on these men.

- **Augustine**, in the late 300s, cemented Christian orthodoxy against the heretic Pelagius, declaring that man is a slave to sin and that salvation is a work of the power of God by grace obtained through faith alone.
- **Martin Luther** in the 1500s recovered that same truth after centuries of drift, bringing the church back to salvation by faith alone through the grace of God provided in Jesus Christ.
- **John Wesley** took that truth out of the catechism classroom and into the roads and byways and mines of England, insisting that you must be born again.

What do these three titans of the faith have in common? They were all converted by the book of Romans. Wherever you see Romans taught and believed in church history, you see radical transformation. The word radical comes from the Latin radix, meaning root. Romans gets to the root of your soul.

ILLUSTRATION: The Book of Romans is to Christian Theology what Hank Williams is to country music. Limbs may grow out in different directions, but ultimately, it is the root that makes a thing what it is.

What do you mean by saying that you are a Christian? I’m not sure what you mean, but by the end of this study, you will certainly know what Paul meant by the term.

CONTEXT: Paul did not found the Roman church. He had never been there. He had never seen it. He had never preached in it. The Christians in Rome had only heard about Paul.

And yet, Paul is writing to Rome — the Eternal City, the city all roads lead to, the capital of the greatest empire the world had ever known.

If that Roman church got off track doctrinally, the consequences would ripple across the known world. So Paul writes this letter as a doctrinal treatise: This is Christianity. This is the Gospel. This is how God saves.

The letter begins with...

1. THE PREACHER (v. 1)

Romans 1:1 (ESV)

1 Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God,

Notice the very first word: Paul. Not Saul. His given name had been Saul of Tarsus. A highly accomplished Pharisee, an enemy of this sect of Judaism called “The way”.

In **Galatians 1:13** he confesses: “I used to persecute the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it.”

But something happened to Saul. Something so great and decisive that he would take a new name. He would encounter the risen Christ on the Road to Damascus, be gloriously saved, and be given this universal Apostleship. He describes himself in three ways:

- **A Bond-Servant** — The Greek word *doulos* means “slave” — someone who belongs entirely to a master. While Roman slavery was often forced, Paul likely had in mind a category familiar to the Jews, taken from **Exodus 21**. Where a servant has completed his term of service, but who willingly binds himself to his master out of love. When

Paul calls himself a servant of Christ, he’s saying: “I belong to Him completely — not by coercion, but by joyful, voluntary surrender.”

- **An Apostle** — Paul was called to this task. The Greek word *apostello* means “to send forth.” Often, we confuse the term Apostle with the term Disciple. There were 12 disciples, and early in Acts, there were 12 Apostles. But the terms are not interchangeable. Disciple means learner, Apostle means Messenger. An apostle was akin to a Royal Ambassador, who speaks on behalf of a King.
- **Set Apart for the Gospel** — His whole being was focused on the Gospel. He breathed it, he ate it, he dreamed it, he lived for it.

Interestingly, this Greek word for “set apart” sounds like the word Pharisee, which

also means “set apart.” Paul is playing on words. He is saying, in effect: I used to pride myself on being a Pharisee, set apart for law-keeping. But now in Christ I am truly set apart — not for ceremony, but for the Gospel of God.

As a **Bond-Servant** of Christ, it was Paul’s duty to pen this book.

As an **Apostle** of Christ, it was within Paul’s authority to say what he would say.

As one **Set Apart** for the Gospel, he wrote for our ultimate benefit.

Not only the Commitment of the Messenger, notice secondly...

2. THE PROCLAMATION (vv. 2–4)

Romans 1:2–4 (ESV)

² which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, ³ concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh ⁴ and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord,

A. Christ Has Prophetic Qualifications (v. 2)

Paul says, " This is no new message. This is no novelty. Jesus didn’t just show up one day and start a religion. The people of God had been waiting for this Jesus for thousands of years.

Occasionally, a Jewish person may feel as though they cannot seriously consider the message of Christianity because they would be turning their back on their heritage. The fact is, if you do not receive the message of Christ, you are in fact turning your back on your heritage.

GENESIS - We have see in Genesis that the Gospel was first preached in the Garden of Eden, as God covered sinful Adam and Eve with a sacrificial substitute through the shedding of blood and promised that the seed of the woman would one day crush the head of the serpent (**Genesis 3:15**). From that moment forward, every book of the Old Testament contains prophecy pointing to this Messiah.

EMMAUS - After Jesus rose from the dead, He walked with two disciples on the road to Emmaus. They were devastated. And Jesus said to them, “O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?” Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures (Luke 24:25–27).

- The Old Testament told us **where** Messiah would be born (Micah 5:2 — Bethlehem),
- **When** He would come (Daniel 9:24–26 — the seventy weeks), and
- How He would be born (Isaiah 7:14 — of a virgin).
- Sixty-five specific prophecies from the Old Testament concerning the Messiah were perfectly fulfilled in Jesus. The Old Testament lays out the profile, and only one man

in all of history fits: Jesus of Nazareth.

ILLUSTRATION: A mathematician once calculated the probability of one person fulfilling just eight of these prophecies. The odds were 1 in 10 to the 17th power. That's like covering the entire state of Florida two feet deep in silver dollars, painting one black, and having a blind man pick it out on the first try.

God isn't asking you for some great leap of faith. The Evidence is overwhelming. This suggests that unbelief springs from another source, which Paul will explain in this letter. *He has Prophetic Qualifications...*

B. Christ Has Human Qualifications (v. 3)

"...concerning His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh..."

There were certain things God told the people of Israel to expect about their Messiah. He was to be a descendant of King David. And Jesus was qualified through both legal and biological lines:

- **Through Joseph** — *Matthew* gives the legal descent of Jesus as King of Israel through Joseph, tracing the royal line through David and his son Solomon. Though Jesus had no natural father, He had the legal right to reign because Joseph was His legal father.
- **Through Mary** — *Luke* traces Mary's line through Nathan, another of David's sons. So Jesus was a descendant of David by blood through Mary as well. Through Joseph He was legally an heir to the throne; through Mary He was in the bloodline of David.

In every sense of the word, Jesus was humanly qualified to be the King of Israel. But more than that, the Son of God became a human being. He lived out a fully human life. He understands your life. He understands your sorrows, your perplexities, your questions. He can sympathize with you because He, like us, became one of us. He is bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. That's Good News.

He has Prophetic Qualifications...Human Qualifications...

C. He Has Divine Qualifications (v. 4)

"...who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord."

The word "declared" in Greek is *horizo* — from which we get our English word "horizon." It means a clear boundary has been marked out. God made it unmistakable. By that supreme demonstration of His ability to conquer death — a power belonging only to God Himself, the Giver of life — He established beyond all doubt that He was indeed God the Son.

He always had been the Son. But on earth, the Son appeared in weakness, in humiliation, in suffering. Now, through the resurrection, His true character has been

made clear. He is the Son with power — glorious, triumphant King, raised from the dead to a new unending life at God’s right hand.

ILLUSTRATION: During the French Revolution, one young man in the court announced he wanted to invent his own religion. An older, wiser man replied: “Good idea. Here’s what you do — die and rise from the dead. We’ll follow you anywhere.” You can talk all day about how to reach God. But you had better overcome death to prove you are true. One Man has done that. Only one.

Not only the Commitment of the Messenger, notice secondly...The Content of the Message, and notice thirdly...

3. THE PEOPLE (vv. 5–7)

Romans 1:5–7 (ESV)

⁵ through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations, ⁶ including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ, ⁷ To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

We accept that Paul is qualified to speak. We accept that the message he brings is of supreme importance. But we may be tempted to say, **“Perhaps this has nothing to do with me.”** Not at all, says Paul.

A. The Scope: For All (v. 5)

Paul says he received apostleship “to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles.” This message is for everyone on the face of the earth.

- No matter your **Nationality** - Romans, Egyptians, Cretans, Arabs, Americans — all are included.
- No matter your **Ethnicity** - White, Black, Asian, Middle Eastern Christ died for you.
- No matter your **Rank** - You may be a little child in an elementary school class, or you may be the King of England - Christ commands all to repent.
- No matter your **Past** - I’ve lived long enough to know for certain, if the sins of this one group were broadcast on the screen for all to see, you’d never come to this church again. In fact, if only mine were broadcast, you’d leave. But before you get too judgmental, if we projected yours on this screen, you’d leave Nassau County, the State of Florida, and you’d pray to God to never encounter us again. BUT NO MATTER YOUR PAST - this Gospel is for you!

B. The Identity: Called, Loved, and Holy (vv. 6–7)

Paul tells the Roman believers three magnificent things about who they are:

- **You Are Called** — The reason you are saved is not because you are smarter than everyone else. The reason you were saved is that God spoke your name. “I know my sheep by name, and I call them, and I give eternal life to them” (John 10:3, 28). Salvation is a work initiated by God, accomplished by God, and finished by God.

- **You Are Loved** — “To all who are beloved of God.” You are loved by God so passionately and at such a cost. When we are adopted into His family, we become His beloved children.
- **You Are Called to Be Saints** — The word is *hagios* — holy ones. This is not a command to try harder. It is a declaration of what God has made you. You are necessarily changed. “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come” (2 Corinthians 5:17).

C. The Greeting: Grace and Peace (v. 7)

Remember, the Roman Church was made up of both Jews and Gentiles, and they were often at odds with each other.

Paul closes his introduction with a greeting that bridges two worlds. In the traditional Roman letter, you would write “Kairine” — graciousness. But Paul changes it to “*Karis*” — grace. And then he adds the traditional Jewish greeting: **Shalom** — peace. Grace and peace.

CONCLUSION/INVITATION: Psychologists would tell you that every person lives with two fundamental problems, whether they can articulate them or not: *Guilt and Anxiety*.

GUILT - *The Guilt is fairly easy to understand. You see, We have violated a holy standard. We don't just make mistakes—we sin. Deep down, we know we're not what we ought to be. That creates **guilt**—objective, not just psychological. And the only answer to guilt is **grace**.*

ANXIETY - *Even if you suppress guilt, you still feel **restless, insecure, and unsettled**. “Am I enough?”, “Will this hold together?”, “What if everything falls apart?” That is **anxiety**—a lack of inner rest. And the only answer to anxiety is **peace**.*

When Paul writes **Romans 1:7, “Grace to you and peace...”**, he's not being poetic—he's being surgical. Grace addresses your standing before God. Peace addresses your state within yourself. Grace is the remedy for your guilt; peace is the result in your heart.

If you seek **peace without grace**, you'll settle for distraction, denial, or self-help. If you claim **grace without peace**, you may understand it intellectually—but it hasn't yet reached your heart.

The gospel is not just that God forgives you—that's grace. It's that He restores you to Himself so deeply that your heart can finally rest—that's peace.

Romans was written by a changed man for the purpose of changing men.