

• *Romans is Paul's fullest explanation of his preaching of the gospel*

Used by God to preach the gospel to gentiles

• *It puzzled people that a Jew should spend his life preaching to gentiles*

• *It puzzled people that Paul did not want his converts to struggle with keeping the Mosaic law*

• *So, God led Paul to write 'Romans' to explain himself and his preaching to gentiles*

• *Romans in outline*

• *The church at Rome*

In the first 7 verses Paul...

1. *Says something about himself*

There are some books of the New Testament which are specially good for Christians to read if they want to come to a full understanding of the Christian faith. They certainly include John's Gospel and the letter to the Romans. 'Romans' was sent to the Christians at Rome as early as AD 57 at a time when Paul was in Corinth and was just about to pay his last visit to Jerusalem. It is **Paul's fullest explanation of his preaching of the gospel**. It does not mention every single thing he believed; it hardly mentions the second coming of Christ, for example. But it certainly covers a lot of ground all in one letter.

What happened was this. Paul was a very controversial figure. He was not one of the original twelve apostles and yet ten years after the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ he started becoming known as the greatest interpreter of the Christian gospel that there ever was. He was specially used by God to preach the gospel to gentiles.

It puzzled people that such a very Jewish person should spend his life preaching to gentiles. He spent so much time with gentiles and in gentile lands that people almost wondered whether he had come to hate his own people. But that was a misunderstanding. Paul longed for the salvation of his own people. Romans will explain how he related to God's chosen people, the Jews.

It puzzled people that Paul did not want his converts to struggle with the burden of keeping the Mosaic law. He said that salvation comes 'without the law'¹. People were perplexed by this. Did it mean that Paul was a wicked person who did not bother about basic morality (see the remark in Romans 3:8)? The real point was that the Mosaic law was a temporary preparation for Jesus. Now that Jesus has come, we relate to Jesus directly and not through the Mosaic law. But this all needed some explanation.

Because of these perplexities God led Paul to write 'Romans' to explain himself and his preaching to gentiles. He hoped that churches at Rome would become a strong centre for evangelistic preaching to areas further west. It was Paul's God-given job to make sure that gentile Christians clearly understood and lived out practically the gospel which had begun when Jesus died and rose again in Jerusalem. After Jerusalem, Rome was the most important city in the world, the capital of the empire. Paul wanted the church there to be strong and clear in its faith. Then he wanted to travel further to the west of Rome, preaching the gospel. He hoped even to get as far as Spain. He wrote Romans to prepare the way.

Romans 1:1–16 is an introduction to the letter. Romans 1:18–3:20 shows why the gospel is needed. Romans 3:21–4:25 is his basic statement of his preaching of justification by faith in Jesus. Romans 5–8 speaks of the results of being right with God. Romans 9–11 explains how the nation of Israel fits in to God's plan of reaching the world. Romans 12:1–15:13 calls the Christians to live out the gospel in a practical manner in their daily living. Then Romans 15:14–16:25 are his concluding remarks and greetings.

Rome was a terrible place. Read the description in Romans 1:19–32 and you will see what I mean. Yet people had come to know Jesus and his power in their lives¹. No one knows for sure who started the Christian church at Rome. Perhaps it was started from Christians returning from the Day of Pentecost. In AD 57 Paul reckoned it needed some apostolic help. It was basically a gentile church but obviously had a sizeable proportion of Jews in it, and Paul deals a lot with questions that Jews were asking. It was a church with both weak and strong Christians in it. And it clearly was a greatly rejoicing church. Paul can say that they have been delivered from the 'spirit of bondage' and they have the 'Spirit of adoption'. They are rejoicing, they are crying 'Abba, Father'. The church as a whole was powerful and rejoicing in the Holy Spirit

Let us look at the first seven verses.

1. **Paul says something about himself.** His opening words are: ¹*Paul a slave of Christ Jesus, a called apostle, set apart for the gospel of God.* He says something humble about himself (he is only a slave). But he has authority to speak God's word (he is an apostle with authority to speak God's gospel and be a founder of the entire

¹ 3:21

¹ 1:16

• *A slave, set apart*

church of the Lord Jesus Christ). And he knows something of his own calling. Both before he was born and at the time of his conversion he was 'set apart' for the work of preaching the gospel.

2. *Says something about his message*

2. **Paul has something to say about his message.** ²*This gospel was promised in advance by God, through his prophets, in the holy writings.* God promised the gospel before it came. It was possible to be saved before Jesus came by believing in the promise concerning Jesus. Unlike any religion or philosophy the Christian faith is 'good news' – an announcement of what God has done.

3. *Has something to say about the central figure of the gospel*

3. **Paul has something to say about the central figure of the gospel.** The very heart and centre of everything he believes is the Lord Jesus Christ. ³*It is about his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh* ⁴*and appointed Son of God in power according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.* Romans 1:3 deals with the way in which the Son of God became a man. He was the Son of God before he was born. Jesus existed before his birth, but not as a human being. He was the Son of God, the divine Creator. He has all the power of God and is the Sustainer of the universe. He was secretly working even in the days of the Old Testament, indeed from eternity. Then the Son of God was born as a human being, born of a virgin. He had a real human nature. He had an existence 'according to the flesh'. This is important for us because it means that Jesus feels for us. He is still a human being in heaven.

• *The Son of God born as a human*

• *In the line of David*

He came in the line of King David. David was a great soldier. Jesus is a kind of spiritual Conqueror. David conquered earthly enemies. Jesus conquers all enemies, spiritual and earthly. David ruled over all Israel; Jesus rules over all his people. David was a king anointed by the Spirit. So David was a pattern of Jesus. It was predicted in the Old Testament that the Saviour would be born in Bethlehem, David's city. He is a king for us. He will conquer our sins and lead us into all of the blessings of his kingdom.

4. *Confirms that every spiritual blessing comes to us through Jesus*

Romans 1:4 goes on to say that at his resurrection Jesus was appointed king of the universe, 'Son of God in power'. 'According to the spirit of holiness' (that is, because he never sinned, because he fully achieved God's will for his life) he was highly exalted.

4. **Every spiritual blessing comes to us through Jesus.** Paul says: ⁵*Through him we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the gentiles for his name's sake.*

5. *Addresses himself to the Christians at Rome*

5. Lastly, in these verses, **Paul addresses himself to the Christians at Rome:** ⁶*And you also are among those who are called, people who belong to Jesus Christ.* ⁷*To all who are loved by God in Rome, and are called to be saints. Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.* Christians are people who have been 'called', powerfully summoned to come to Christ. God calls us because he loves us. He calls us to belong to Christ, and he calls us to be 'saints', people who are different from the rest of the world and who live for God.



slices.org.uk

Dr Michael Eaton is highly respected internationally as a theologian, author, preacher and teacher. He lives in Kenya where he is one of the leaders of the Chrisco Fellowship. His *Preaching Through The Bible (PTTB)* books are highly popular worldwide. Michael Eaton puts the theological and practical meaning of the Bible in a clear and down-to-earth way so that what is written can be easily understood by the reader.



These specially reformatted chapters "Slices of Bread" produced by Sovereign World Trust are available in three categories as set out below

Slices for the Nations	Slices for Sponsors	Slices for Everyone / Slice of the Week
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For pastors, libraries and colleges in those parts of the world where resources are scarce and unaffordable In the fullness of time the whole series will be made available free of charge Weekly emailings of 3 - 4 Slices or available to download from the <i>Slices</i> web site 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For those in more prosperous circumstances who can afford to contribute to the development of this material and its distribution with a small monthly donation The same material as Slices for the Nations Weekly emailings of 3 - 4 Slices or by download from the <i>Slices</i> web site 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For those who wish to sample the material or dip into it from time to time, a proportion of the PTTB series is available free of charge Slices for Everyone (as a download) or Slice of the Week (attached to a weekly email) The remainder of the PTTB material is available to Sponsors and those eligible to receive Slices for the Nations

To subscribe please contact: slicesofbread@sovereignworldtrust.org.uk stating which category fits your situation. Further details are at www.slices.org.uk
 Details of the availability of *Preaching Through The Bible* books and how they may be purchased can be found on www.ibtr.org.uk