

# Exploring Romans

*From Creation to Consummation*



**A lectionary-based sermon series**

*12<sup>th</sup> June – 30<sup>th</sup> August*

***Creation | Corruption | Covenant | Christ | Church | Consummation***

# Introduction

I am so excited that you are about to embark on a journey exploring Paul's letter to Christians living in Rome. I hope this becomes a voyage of discovery and in order to help you navigate your way through, what most consider to be Paul's *magnum opus*, I have provided this very brief introduction. The primary purpose of the rhythm of daily reading is not to increase the information we know, but to be formed into the image of Christ as we listen to him speak through the words of the Bible and allowing the Holy Spirit to change us. On Sunday at our Zoom Church we shall be looking at the readings where I shall endeavour to give some handy hints to help you reflect on the reading for the week, for example highlighting that when Paul uses the first person singular "I" in Romans 7 he is not speaking autobiographically!

The apostle Paul wrote his letter to Christians living in Rome whilst he was residing in Corinth around the year 56/57 CE. Paul had been engaged in missionary activity around the eastern Mediterranean and was going to return to Jerusalem to deliver the collection that had been taken up from the gentile churches. Paul intended traveling to Rome before heading westward to Spain, taking the gospel of Jesus into new territory (Rom. 1:13; 15:22-29; 16:1).

Paul's letter to the Christians in Rome sought to inform them of his missionary plans, but it also addresses some particular issues the Roman Christians were facing, one of which was the return of Jews to Rome their having previously been expelled by the edict of Claudius in 49 CE which meant the churches in Rome were now entirely gentile, so when Jews began to return from 54 CE, following the death of Claudius, there could have been problems integrating Jewish Christians into the gentile churches (cf. Rom. 12-16) as well as broader questions of the role of Jews in God's plan (cf. Rom. 9-11).

The letter itself divides roughly into four sections: chapters 1-4, 5-8, 9-11, and 12-16. I have provided a brief outline of Romans over the page which will help you place the section you're reading into its wider context.

## An outline of Romans<sup>1</sup>

1. **Unveiling God's righteousness (1-4)**
  - a. Introductions, greetings, and defence of Paul's travel plans (1:1-15)
  - b. Thesis statement (1:16-17)
  - c. Gentiles and Jews condemned, God's purposes remaining (1:18-3:20)
  - d. Covenant fulfilled through faith (3:21-4:25)
2. **From new covenant to new creation (5-8)**
  - a. Assurance based on cross and spirit (5:1-11)
  - b. Launching the new humanity (5:12-21)
  - c. The new exodus: baptism and freedom (6:1-23)
  - d. The law and the spirit (7:1-8:11)
  - e. Spirit and new creation (8:12-30)
  - f. Nothing shall separate us from God's love (8:31-39)
3. **God's faithfulness and Israel's unbelief (9-11)**
  - a. Paul's grief (9:1-5)
  - b. God's plan in Israel's history (9:6-29)
  - c. God's covenant-faithfulness in the gospel (9:30-10:21)
  - d. God's abiding faithfulness (11:1-36)
4. **Faithfulness and fellowship in the wider world (12-16)**
  - a. The transformed mind and its effects (12:1-21)
  - b. Living between the times (13:1-14)
  - c. Growing towards unity (14:1-15:12)
  - d. Missionary plans and closing greetings (15:13-16:27)

We are going to be focusing primarily on sections 2, 3 and 4a. The broad theme of Romans is summed up in Rom. 1:16-17 which contains the phrase 'the righteousness of God'. The language of "righteousness" is something we use quite a bit in church, but we may stumble and stammer if we were asked to explain it! Essentially the phrase *righteousness of God* refers to God being faithful to his covenant promises made to Abraham to redeem the world through the Messiah and the Holy Spirit.

Section 2 teases this out for us: in chapter 5 we have the story of creation and redemption told through the lens of Adam and Christ with creation being enslaved to sin and death, then in chapter 6 we discover slaves coming through the waters of baptism to freedom. In chapter 7 we read of the giving of the Torah at Mt Sinai, and finally in chapter 8 the people of God are led by the Spirit as Israel was led in the wilderness reaching their inheritance! Paul tells the Christian story through Christ who is reliving the story of Israel and Adam. We'll explore this more on Zoom!

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<sup>1</sup> This is taken from *The New Testament in its World* by N T Wright and M. F. Bird

# Daily Prayer<sup>2</sup>

## ~ Rhythms of Grace ~

### Morning

Why not try carving out ten minutes to pray using the acronym below:

**Praise:** Spend time praising God for who he is and what he's done for us

**Rejoice:** Spend some time rejoicing in God's blessing through adoration and thanksgiving. This is the most important and enjoyable part of prayer so linger on this step.

**Ask:** Spend a few minutes asking God for his Kingdom to come in the things that lie ahead of you that day, in the lives of those you know, and in the world around us.

**Yield:** To yield means to surrender, so spend a few minutes surrendering to Jesus and listening to what he might want to say to you that day.

### Evening

Before you go to bed, carve out 10 minutes to pray through the prayer of *Examen* – a prayerful reflection which enables you to review the day gone by and to look with anticipation and motivation towards the day to come. Use these four simple steps to frame your time:

**Replay** the day in order to recognise your emotions and God's presence with you

**Rejoice** in all the good things of the day

**Repent** of the ways in which you did not follow Jesus wholeheartedly. The Greek word for repentance is *metanoia*, which means to turn around. Repenting is therefore about choosing to turn towards God, saying sorry where we need to, and turning to him with the things that are facing us that day.

**Resolve** to live for Jesus tomorrow

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<sup>2</sup> These two pages have been adapted from Kings Cross Church, London - <https://www.pattern.org.uk/> and are included here with permission.

# Daily Reading

## ~ Rhythms of Grace ~

Rather than racing through the text each day, we're going to use an acronym to help us slow down and delve deeper into the passage. Each day we'll be following the pattern of BREAD.

### **Be still**

Find a place where you can encounter God, ask him to fill the space and then take a minute in stillness. Focus on slowing your breathing down and calming your mind. Fix your eyes on Jesus and invite the Holy Spirit to guide your time.

### **Read**

Read through the passage for the day. Pause. Now read through the passage again slowly. Look for one verse that stands out, grabs your attention or interests you. Write out that verse in the read section.

### **Encounter**

Taking your chosen verse begin to meditate on it. What comes to mind and how does it make you feel? What do you think God is trying to reveal through this verse and allow him to speak to your heart and mind. Write a short reflection on what you think he might be saying.

### **Apply**

Now, turn your focus outwards, think about how you might be able to apply this to your day and write down the one thing you're going to try and live out.

### **Devote**

Finally, close by writing a simple prayer of devotion to God. Ask that God would fill you afresh and commit your day to him.

Each day, as you finish this practice, add a title to the top of the page summing up what you took away from your reading.

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**Be still**

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**Read: Romans 5**

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**Read: Romans 6:1b-11**

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**Read: Romans 9**

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**Be still**

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**Read: Romans 10**

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**Be still**

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**Read: Romans 12:1-8**

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**Read: Romans 12:9-21**

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