

“The Greatest Letter Ever Written”

How and Why God Saved the World

Romans Series
PBC 2025

Texts: Romans 1:1-7; 8-17; 16:25-27

Someone described Romans as “the greatest letter ever written.” I can’t think of a more fitting description. Romans is an extraordinary letter because it reveals the profound grace found in an incredible gospel provided by a magnificent Savior, bringing immense glory to God!

This morning, we embark on a life-changing journey! As we navigate this wonderful book, I am convinced that the truths we uncover will transform us if we willingly accept and fully embrace them.

To help us start well, I want to pray for the Spirit’s help in seeing, understanding, and receiving what He inspired in this book. And I want to consider the terrain we hope to traverse on our journey.

I. The Importance/Significance of Romans

There are good reasons commentators refer to Romans as “the greatest letter ever written!” For over two thousand years, God has used Romans to transform the lives of His people, shape the doctrine of the Church, and save sinners from the wrath of God for their sins.

Martin Lloyd-Jones noted, *“The Epistle to the Romans has, possibly, played a more important and critical role in the history of the church than any other single book in the entire Bible!”*

- J. I. Packer commented, *“All roads in the Bible lead to Romans, and all views afforded by the Bible are seen most clearly from Romans, and when the message of Romans gets into a person’s heart there is no telling what may happen.”*

- Piper called Romans “the most important theological work ever written.”
- John Stott summed it up best in these words: “Paul’s letter to the Romans is a kind of Christian manifesto. . . a manifesto of freedom through Jesus Christ. It is the fullest, plainest, and grandest statement of the gospel in the New Testament. Its message is not that man was born free, and everywhere he is in chains; it is rather that human beings are born in sin and slavery, and Jesus Christ is come to set us free.” (Stott)
- Ben Merkle called Romans “the greatest letter ever written because of its great impact in history, its grand theology about Christ, and its practical instructions for Christian living.”
- ***And it would not surprise me if some of you were saved by reading or hearing verses from Romans!***

II. The Purpose for Romans (1:11-12)

*For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of His Son, that without ceasing I mention you always in my prayers, asking that somehow by God’s will I may now at last succeed in coming to you. For I long to see you, **that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you**—that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other’s faith, both yours and mine!*

Paul wrote Romans to impart to this church a spiritual gift (a gift from the Holy Spirit) that would strengthen them so that:

A. He may see genuine, lasting spiritual fruit among them and the nations around them (1:13).

I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that I have often intended to come to you (but thus far have been prevented), in order that I may reap some spiritual harvest among you as well as among the rest of the Gentiles.

B. They might become ministry partners with him in the spread of the gospel (1:14-15; 15:22-24)

Romans 1:14–15: *I am under obligation to Greeks and barbarians, both to the wise and the foolish. ¹⁵ So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.*

Romans 15:22–24: *This is the reason why I have so often been hindered from coming to you. ²³ But now, since I no longer have any room for work in these regions, and since I have longed for many years to come to you, ²⁴ I hope to see you in passing as I go to Spain, and to be helped on my journey there by you, once I have enjoyed your company for a while.*

C. They might display the effect of the gospel that reconciles them to God and unifies them to one another. (15:5-7)

Romans 15:5-7: May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, ⁶ that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁷ Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.

- So, what gift from the Spirit would accomplish these three extraordinary purposes? The Gospel of God!
- Romans is the Spirit-inspired letter that contains the fullest explanation and clearest application of that Gospel.

III. The Function of Romans (15:13)

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.

- ***Paul concludes his letter by asking God to fill the hearts of the believers in Rome with joy and peace so that by the power of the Holy Spirit, they would have unquenchable hope in the face of unrelenting persecution, unending affliction, and unexpected suffering for their faith!***
- So how does Romans function to bring about this fullness of joy, unshakeable peace, and unquenchable hope in our lives?
 - ◇ By instructing us in the truth of the Gospel (1-4)
 - ◇ By sanctifying us by the power of the Gospel (5-8)
 - ◇ By assuring us of the trustworthiness of the Gospel (9-11)
 - ◇ By encouraging us to live in light of the Gospel (12-13)
 - ◇ By exhorting us to protect the unity of the Gospel (14-15:13)
 - ◇ By engaging us in the mission of the Gospel (15:14-16:27)

IV. The Message of Romans (1:16-17)

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. ¹⁷ For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith."

The Gospel reveals a righteousness from God that grants sinners a right standing with Him, enables them to live righteously for Him, and fosters righteous relationships that please Him, available only:

- by grace from God
- through faith in the Gospel of His Son
- for the glory of God

In other words, Romans tells the story of how and why God saves the world through the Gospel of His Son for His eternal glory!

This is why I want us to remember Romans as a letter about ***the Grace of God in the Gospel of God for the Glory of God!***

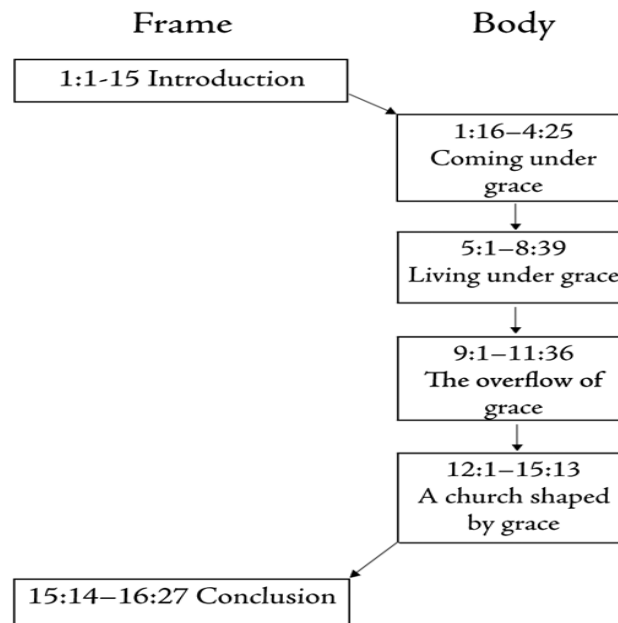
V. The Structure of the Romans

Paul crafted the structure and flow of Romans to reveal two profound spiritual realities that break the power of sin, free people from the penalty of sin, transform hostile sinners into holy sons and daughters of God, and give them unshakeable confidence that comes from the hope found in the Gospel!

A. The Righteousness of God Revealed and Obtained in the Gospel

- 1. Introduction (1:1-17)***
- 2. The Universal Need of God's Righteousness (1:18-3:20)***
- 3. The Means of Obtaining God's Righteousness (3:21-4:25)***
- 4. The Benefits Received from God's Righteousness (5:1-8:39)***
- 5. The Vindication of God's Righteousness (9:1-11:36)***
- 6. The Display of the Transforming Power of God's Righteousness (12:1-15:13)***
- 7. Conclusion (15:14-16:27)***

B. The Grace of God Received and Displayed by the Church



Conclusion: Our Response to Romans

I want to encourage us to do four things as we journey through Romans:

1. **Read** its chapters slowly, prayerfully, and repeatedly each week.
2. **Receive** its truths joyfully and apply them diligently.
3. **Retain** its teaching intentionally and carefully preserve what you learn each week.
4. **Request** insight into this book from God and celebrate the marvelous treasures He has given you in this book as He reveals them to you!

Love Romans – Learn Romans – Live Romans!

*May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing,
so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.*

(Romans 15:13)