

# TTB - Romans

## Background

- Written from Corinth near the end of Paul's second journey, as he was about to set out for Jerusalem with the offering that he had been collecting from the Gentile believers in Asia Minor, Macedonia, and Greece.
- He had never been to Rome, but he wanted to visit the communities there.
- The Roman believers had been expelled from Rome during the reign of Claudius. As a matter of fact, that expulsion was likely a result of the believers preaching the gospel.
  - In the year 49 CE, a series of disruptions and civil unrest gave Claudius an excuse to take actions against the "foreign superstitions." The Roman historian Suetonius writes, "Since the Jews constantly made disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus, he expelled them from Rome." Most scholars agree that Suetonius mistook the title Christos (Χριστός), that is, Messiah, for a person's name. (Chronicles of the Apostles)
- However, after Claudius died the ban was lifted and the Jews and the believers were allowed to return.
- The believing communities throughout the Roman Empire were made up of a combination of Jews and Gentiles. There had been tension between those two groups since the good news was first preached to Gentiles in Antioch.
- However, Paul was on a mission from the Jerusalem Council (which we read about in Acts 15) to bring peace between the two groups and help the Gentiles understand better what they were required to do.
- Paul addresses this issue often in his letter, but especially in Galatians, Romans, and Ephesians.

## How We Misread Romans

- If you read almost any Christian commentary on the book of Romans you'll find it taught that Paul was contrasting "the Law and Grace" and trying to show the Roman believers that they are "free from the Law." That is a false dichotomy, and a misreading of both the book of Romans and all of Paul's letters. God gave the Law to the Jewish people by His grace, and the Law helps us all to understand His grace more clearly through its definitions of sin and righteousness.
  - Paul is not contrasting the Law with grace, he is explaining the purpose of the Torah and trying to help his readers, and us, understand how the grace and the righteousness of God works.
- We also misread Romans if we come away from it thinking that Paul is trying to say that the Law, the Torah, is somehow the source of evil, or the source of legalism, in us.
- The Law of God, the Torah, is a gift from God. God does not give evil gifts, he only gives good gifts. As we read in James 1:7 — "Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow."
  - If so, the Law of God is, by definition, a good gift.
- As such, we need to look more carefully at what Paul says in Romans about the Law, and try to understand his arguments more fully.
  - "through the Law comes knowledge of sin" (Romans 3:20)

- “Do we then nullify the Law through faith? Far from it! On the contrary, we establish the Law.” (Romans 3:31)
- “What shall we say then? Is the Law sin? Far from it!” (Romans 7:1)
- “So then, the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.” (Romans 7:12)
- “the Law is spiritual” (Romans 7:16)
- “For I joyfully agree with the law of God in the inner person” (Romans 7:22)
- I’m going to try to give you a brief overview of the book of Romans in this class. Unfortunately, there is no way to discuss this book completely in only an hour and a half, so I’m also going to highly recommend that you do two more things to learn more.
  - 1) Go back and listen to my teaching on Galatians from a few months ago. Understanding that book correctly is key to understanding the writings of Paul.
  - 2) Listen to Daniel Lancaster’s excellent 20-part teaching on the book of Romans, which I will link to on the website. He breaks down the book of Romans in much more detail and provides a wonderful exegetical teaching on the text.

## Introduction (1:1-15)

- As always, even Paul’s introduction includes some powerful thoughts.
- In Romans 1:3-4 he points both to Yeshua’s physical lineage as the son of David, the King Messiah, and to his spiritual lineage as the Son of God, emphasizing that both are important.
- In verse 5 he addresses his audience, showing us that he is writing the letter primarily to Gentiles, likely because of the makeup of the community of faith in Rome.
- He then expresses his desire to visit Rome on his way to Spain, with the goal of reaping a harvest among them, to have an impact on them.

## The Gospel (1:16-17)

- Romans 1:16-17 is a well-known passage, but if you’re not paying attention you might miss some elements of it.
- 1) The Gospel is the “power of God” — the good news about the work of the Messiah is how God is showing his power in the world, changing the lives of people everywhere.
- 2) The Gospel is “for salvation” — Salvation from what? From the wrath of God that is coming in the Age to Come. From Judgement. From the natural result of the sin we humans struggle with.
- 3) “to everyone who believes” — Believes what? Is it just about belief? No, there’s action behind the belief, as we will see in a moment, but it starts with belief. Salvation starts with our acceptance of the truth and efficacious nature of the Messiah’s death.
- 4) “To the Jew first” — Paul talks about this more elsewhere, but the good news about Messiah was given to the Jewish people first for a reason. They are the chosen people of God, and they are the priesthood of the nations.
- 5) “and also to the Greek” — a.k.a. the Gentiles, who are not an afterthought in the plan of God, but are destined to join with Israel.

## No Excuse for Gentiles (Romans 1:18-32)

- Turns to talk about the “ungodliness and unrighteousness” of Gentiles.
- Psalm 19
- “Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts” — “to dishonorable passions” — “to a debased mind”

## God’s Judgement is Coming for Everyone (2:1-11)

- “God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance”
- Paul is calling out hypocrites in the body of faith, not just pagans
- 2:6 — “He will render to each one according to his works”
  - Not just based on what you believe
  - Sheep and the goats
- The wrath of God will come for all people who “do not obey the truth and obey unrighteousness.”
  - “To the Jew first, and also the Greek” — Just like the Gospel goes out to Jews first, they are responsible for hearing and obeying first. Priesthood of the nations.

## Back to the Gentiles (2:12-16)

- Briefly addressing Gentiles again.
- Gentiles who do what the Torah requires show that it is written on their hearts (v. 15).
  - This is a sign of the coming redemption! Jeremiah 31:31

## Speaking to Jews and Proselytes (2:17-29)

- Then he turns his attention to Jews and Proselytes.
  - “If you call yourself a Jew,” are you even following the Torah?
  - Remember, some proselytes converted so that they could be saved, not because they were committed to the life of Torah.
- 3:23 — God is dishonored when Jews break the Torah.
  - Again, not something you see very often in Christian teaching. Honoring God through the Torah?
  - 3:25 — The point of being Jewish is following the Torah. Being Jewish only makes sense if you are faithful to the covenant.

## What Advantage in being a Jew? (3:1-8)

- Paul is aware that some people might misconstrue what he’s saying, so he attempts to nip that in the bud.
- John Harrigan says that Paul interrupts himself here and comes back to this argument in Romans 9:1.
- Argument of opponents — By No Means!

## The Universal Need For Salvation (3:9-20)

- Are the Jews better off? Are they inherently more righteous? Not at all.
- We are all sinners. No one is righteous.
- There is no difference in our need for salvation.
- 3:19 — The Torah was given to the Jews so that every mouth (including the Gentiles) can be held accountable to God.
  - The Jews were given the Torah so that it could be spread to the ends of the earth, so that everyone can be held accountable.
  - Jewish Identity is not the key to salvation, that's not the point of the Torah.
  - The Torah gives us knowledge of sin.
- Works of the Law = Jewish Identity

## God's Righteousness Through Faith (3:21-31)

- Note: Righteousness and Justification come from the same root word.
  - **Righteousness:** Conformity to a certain set of expectations. Fulfillment of the expectations God has for us.
  - **Justification:** A declarative act of God by which he establishes people as legally righteous.
- The Righteousness of God has been revealed in the coming of the Messiah, not only for Jews, but for all of mankind.
  - The Torah and the prophets confirm this.
- Boasting: Who has the right to boast in their status as a Jew or as a Gentile? No one!
  - There is only one way to be justified: Through the grace/kindness of the Messiah.
  - Being Jewish or Gentile makes no difference in that.
- Do we overthrow the Torah by this? Does that mean there's no value in being Jewish? NO! We uphold the Torah.
  - This justification of all people does not change or undermine anything in the Torah. On the contrary, it actually upholds the Torah. Remember 3:1-2! There is much value in being Jewish.
  - This justification of all people upholds the validity of the Torah. Now, Paul will explain how.

## Abraham As An Example (4:1-25)

- Abraham was the first Hebrew, but he didn't rely on that for his own salvation.
- He is the father of the Gentiles (uncircumcised) because he was uncircumcised when he came to faith. He is the father of the circumcised because he did become the first Jew/Hebrew.
- 4:13 — What was the promise of Abraham and his offspring? That they would be heirs of God.

## Result: Reconciliation with God (5:1-11)

- What is the result of this justification? What actually happens we God counts us as righteous?
  - We have peace with God.
  - It's like we were at war with him because of our choices to follow our own sinful desires.
- In addition to peace with God, we also gain:
  - the Kindness of God
  - hope in the Glory of God (the resurrection)
- 5:3-5 — Sidebar on suffering
- 5:9 — What are we saved from? The Wrath of God on the Day of the Lord.
- 5:10 — Justification and righteousness are, at their core, really about how we are reconciled to God. Sin separates us from God, and we need to be reconciled through a legal declaration of righteousness.
- *kal v'chomer* (קל וחומר) “lesser and greater” — Being reconciled with God is a BIG thing! It's so much easier for God to save us from the coming wrath.

## Adam and Yeshua (5:12-21)

- Then Paul talks about why sin is even a problem.
- Sin = missing the mark?
- What is the mark? Torah!
  - 5:20 — the Torah came to increase the trespass by defining sin and applying it to all of humanity.
  - As the sin increased, the kindness of God increased all the more.

## Dead to Sin (6:1-14)

- False Premise Alert! (Paul uses this method often)
- If the kindness of God gets better as sin increases, doesn't that mean we should sin more so that we can have more grace?
- Of course not! We are supposed to be dead to sin.
- We live a proleptic life of sinless obedience. Our baptism into Yeshua brings us into a new life, a life like the future life of resurrection. But that life is proleptic: already, but not yet. We have to choose to live in it now (6:11), but even when we do we are still under the influence of our sinful desires.
- Living within God's boundaries is actually freedom. We have the freedom to follow, to obey, to be righteous.
- It's like we are dead. In a sense we did die when we went through the waters of baptism.
  - In a sense, then it's as if we are no longer held to the Torah's judgement for sin, because dead people are free from the obligations of the Torah.
  - However, don't take this too far. We are still actually alive, and our “death” is only proleptic. Torah still actually applies (Matthew 5:17).

## Obedience and Righteousness (6:15-23)

- False Premise Alert! If you're dead to the Torah's obligations, does that mean that there's no more definition of sin so you can sin all you want?
- Of course not!
- 6:17 — We are no longer slaves to sin, we have the Torah written in our hearts (Jeremiah 31), and we are slaves to righteousness.
- 6:19 — you used to live in lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, but now you live in righteousness.
  - Remember Romans 2:13 — “it is not the hearers of the Law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the Law who will be justified.”

## For the Jews: An Analogy using Marriage (7:1-6)

- Paul now turns back to addressing the Jewish believers in Rome
- An analogy about sin using the laws regarding marriage.
- vv. 4-6 — Applying the analogy
  - Read vv. 12-13 first — “So the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.”
  - We have died to the law regarding our marriage to the flesh

## Sin and Torah (7:7-25)

- False Premise Alert! Is the law sin? NO!
- Sin takes advantage of the Torah.
- The Torah defines sin, so sin says, “Hey, I’m here!”
- The Torah is holy, and the commandment is holy, and righteous, and good. This is not a Torah problem, it’s a sin problem.
- 7:14 — The Torah is spiritual, but we are fleshly.
- 7:22 — “I delight in the law of God, in my inner being” — Jeremiah 31

## Walk in the Spirit (8:1-11)

- the law of the Spirit of life —
  - Ezekiel 36:27 — And I will put My Spirit within you and bring it about that you walk in My statutes, and are careful and follow My ordinances.
- 8:4 — The Torah requires righteousness.
- 8:7 — The mind set on the flesh does not submit to the Torah
  - THEREFORE, the mind set on the Spirit DOES submit to the Torah.
- This is about our life in the Spirit of God, not relying on our own abilities, but relying on Him!

## Adoption and Proleptic Glory (8:12-39)

- If we are led by the Spirit of God, then we are sons of God.
- We are heirs of God, and co-heirs with Messiah.
- That means we will be resurrected, too, just like he was!
- Predestination — Focus on the REASON, not on the predestination question itself.
  - Predestination is about conformity, not future salvation.
  - “predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son”
  - Predestined → Called → Justified → Glorified
- So, tribulation can’t separate us from God. We have been called, He gives us the strength to endure.

## God’s Choice of Israel (9:1-13)

- Back to his argument in 3:1-2: “Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the value of circumcision? Much in every way. To begin with, the Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God.”
- Break it down:
  - my brothers = He is Jewish, too
  - my kinsmen according to the flesh = “physically” - Paul had other kinsmen spiritually
  - They are Israelites = physical descendants of Jacob
  - and to them belong the adoption = as children of God (Exodus 4:22 — Then you shall say to Pharaoh, ‘This is what the LORD says: “Israel is My son, My firstborn.”’)
  - the glory = revelation of God, which is then transmitted to the nations
  - the covenants = All of them, including the new covenant (Jeremiah 31:31)
  - the giving of the law, = This is a good thing!
  - the worship = in the Temple
  - and the promises. = of Abraham, including the promise of the Land of Israel, and prosperity in it.
  - To them belong the patriarchs, = Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the fathers of the faith.
    - This is in direct opposition to Justin Martyr, who says: “For the true spiritual Israel, and descendants of Judah, Jacob, Isaac, and Abraham... are we who have been led to God through this crucified Christ...” (Justin Martyr, “Dialogue with Trypho.” *ANF* 1:200, chapter 11.)
  - and from their race, according to the flesh is the Messiah = physically
- 9:5 — “who is God over all, blessed forever.” == This is not a literal translation of the Greek
  - YLT says, “who is over all, God blessed to the ages”
  - For better sources of a high Christology, see John 1, Colossians 1, and Hebrews 1.

- 9:6 — “not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel” — Regardless of physical descent, everyone still has to repent.
  - Matthew 3:9 — and do not assume that you can say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father’; for I tell you that God is able, from these stones, to raise up children for Abraham.
- 9:7 — Metaphor using the story of the birth of Isaac: Physical descent does not bring salvation, repentance does.
  - “children of the promise” are Jews who have put their faith in Yeshua — Messianic Jews

## Some Don’t Believe, is God Unjust? (9:14-10:4)

- 9:14 — False Premise Alert!
- 9:14-24 == God is sovereign
- 9:24 — First reference to the Gentiles in the chapter.
- 9:27 — The Remnant is Messianic Jews
- 9:31-32 — Paraphrase: “Israel, who pursued a law that would lead to righteousness, did not succeed in reaching that law. [How? By not believing in the Messiah, the one the Torah points to, the goal of the Torah (10:4)] Why [did they not succeed in reaching the righteousness defined in the Torah]? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as if it were based on [Jewish identity].”
- 10:4 — Messiah is the GOAL of the Torah, not the end.
  - The non-believing Jews missed the point, that the Torah points to the Messiah and the need for faith in him. (Remember the road to Emmaus.)

## Deliverance for All People (10:5-13)

- In 9:31, Paul said, “Israel... pursued a law that would lead to righteousness.”
- Now he expounds on that more. How do we know that the Torah leads to righteousness?
- Moses says, “the person who does the commandments shall live by them” — In other words, the person who follows the Torah will be led to the Messiah.
- AND “the righteousness of faith” confirms that, telling us that this understanding about the Messiah is not too far from us, it’s not hard to grasp.
- 10:12 — There is no distinction between Jew and Gentile in regards to salvation

## How will Israel Hear? (10:14-21)

- How will those in Israel who don’t believe in the Messiah understand this unless they are told?
- 10:18 — But is it really true that they have never heard? They have the Torah!
  - Right, but they didn’t understand what the Torah was saying.
- 10:20 — This, then, opened the door for the Gentiles to come into the body of faith, too.
  - This is not an afterthought!



- 10:21 - Israel has been disobedient and contrary, but God continues to hold out his hands to them

## The Messianic Jewish Remnant (11:1-10)

- False Premise Alert! “Has God rejected his people?” NO!
- “God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew” (knew before anyone else)
- The remnant, the elect, are the Messianic Jews, those Jews who have accepted the rule and reign of King Messiah. They are the sign that God has not rejected his people Israel.

## Gentiles Grafted In (11:11-24)

- False Premise Alert!
  - They stumbled, but they have not fallen. This is not permanent!
- Firstfruits dough = Messianic Jews, remnant
- Lump of dough = the rest of Israel
- Root = Messianic Jews, remnant
- Branches = the rest of Israel
- Humility is the key for Gentiles
- 11:24 — kal v’chomer — The natural branches are even more able to be grafted back in. They have not stumbled so far that they have fallen.

## Israel’s Gifts and Calling (11:25-36)

- There is a slowdown of the process, ordained by God, so that the Gentiles have an opportunity to find faith.
- 11:28 — They fight against the gospel, like Paul did before his Damascus Road experience
- As for election, they Patriarchs are STILL special to God, and the promises he gave them still apply.
  - 11:29 — because the gifts and callings of God are irrevocable.
- 11:32 — We all disobey, you’re no different than them.
- 11:33 — God’s workings at times may not make sense. he does things the way he wants to do them with his own ends in mind. We have to trust and be faithful.

## Sacrifice, Unity, and Love (12:1-21)

- Because of God’s sovereignty and our need for humility regarding the Jewish people, we need to present our own bodies as living sacrifices to God.
- 12:3 — “everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think,”
- Gifts are not an exhaustive list!
- 12:14 — Matthew 5:44 — “But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,”

## Submit to Authorities (13:1-7)

## Love One Another (13:8-14)

## Clean and Unclean, Weak and Strong (14:1-15:7)

- Traditional Interpretation of Romans 14:
  - **Weak in Faith:** Jewish believers who believe law still must be observed
  - **Strong in Faith:** Christians who know law is cancelled
  - **One who eats anything:** A Christian who knows the dietary laws are cancelled (strong in faith)
  - **One who eats only vegetables:** A person who practices the Bible's dietary laws (weak in faith)
- The issue in Romans 14 is actually about the potential defilement of food that is, in all other respects, kosher.
- There are two key terms in Greek that you have to understand in order to understand this passage (and others like it).
  - **κοινός - koinos:** Common. When used in reference to Jewish dietary law, it refers to otherwise permitted food rendered unfit for consumption by contact with idolatry, non-Jews, or some other source of defilement.
  - **ἀκάθαρτος - akathartos:** Unclean. When used in reference to Jewish dietary law, it refers either to foods which have become ritually unclean or to the meat of unclean animals.
- So, the issue Paul is addressing here has to do with food that is not set apart for the temple service.
  - Some Pharisees refused to eat any meat that was considered "common." They desired to live in a perpetual state of ritual purity, and considered eating meat that was not kodesh, holy, as wrong.
  - These Pharisees took on Daniel's approach when eating food that did not meet their stricter requirements: They avoided the meat and ate only vegetables. (Daniel 1:12-16)
  - Paul seems to have taken, even as a Pharisee, a more lenient approach, at least outside of Israel, since meat slaughtered outside of Israel was never intended for temple service.
  - He says that the unnecessary strictness of those believers was a weakness, but that they should be treated with respect.
  - In 1 Corinthians 8:13 Paul addresses a similar issue, saying there, "Therefore, if food causes my brother to sin, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause my brother to sin."
- In this passage, Paul also addresses different days that some people are concerned about.
- The traditional interpretation says:
  - **One who esteems one day as better:** A sabbatarian, someone who keeps the sabbath or Jewish festivals (weak in faith)
  - **One who observes the day:** A Sabbatarian (weak in faith)
  - **One who esteems all days alike:** A Christian (strong one) who knows the sabbath is cancelled.

- But the issue Paul was addressing had nothing to do with Jewish holidays. This was actually a broader question within the Jewish world at that time: How do you engage with pagan Gentiles when they are celebrating their pagan festivals?
  - The Mishnah includes some discussions about this topic (m. Avodah Zarah 1:1–3):
  - On the three days before the festivals of gentiles the following actions are prohibited, as they would bring joy to the gentile, who would subsequently give thanks to his object of idol worship on his festival: It is prohibited to engage in business with them; to lend items to them or to borrow items from them; to lend money to them or to borrow money from them; and to repay debts owed to them or to collect repayment of debts from them.... Rabbi Yishmael says: On the three days before the festivals of gentiles and on the three days after them, it is prohibited to engage in business with those gentiles. And the Rabbis say: It is prohibited to engage in business with them before their festivals, but it is permitted to engage in business with them after their festivals. [Rabbi Meir said:] And these are the festivals of gentiles: Kalenda, Saturnalia, and Kratesis, and the day of the festival of their kings, and the birthday of the king, and the anniversary of the day of the death of the king.
- What is Paul's conclusion here? What does he say our approach should be when dealing with people who practice their faith in different ways than us, especially in ways that are not incorrect, but that make them look weak in faith?
  - **[READ Romans 14:13-19]**
  - **[READ Romans 15:1-2]**

## The Hope of the Gentiles (15:8-21)

- Continuing on the theme of imitating Jesus, Paul comes back to a theme he started the letter with:
  - Why does God have a special relationship with the Jewish people?
- I think Romans 15:8-9 are a great condensation of the story of God, the purpose behind all the things he has done and continues to do in the world
  - **[READ Romans 15:8-9]**
- Paul then turns to his own work among the Gentiles.
  - His ministry among the Gentiles is so that “so that *my* offering of the Gentiles may become acceptable.” (15:16)
  - His goal is to see “the obedience of the Gentiles by word and deed” (15:18)
  - This is a necessary work.
- Romans 15:27-28 is one of the most important passages for understanding Paul's perspective on the Gentiles, and one we don't generally hear taught from the pulpit.
  - “...they [the Gentiles] are indebted to them [the Jews]. For if the Gentiles have shared in their spiritual things, they are indebted to do them a service also in material things.

## Concluding Remarks, Instructions, and Benediction (15:22-16:27)

- We don't have time to study Paul's final instructions and greetings in detail, but I maintain that some of the most interesting information we can glean about Paul and the other first century believers comes from the greetings at the end of the Epistles.