

Study Theme for the Month of October (and the first Sunday in November)

“This I Believe”/ “Rediscovering the Foundation”

Biblical Texts: Passages from Paul’s Letter to the Romans

The apostle Paul can be seen setting up churches in what we now know as Turkey and Greece in the book of Acts. But his long term plan was to move further west, to Rome and beyond. A church already existed there; a church that Paul did not found. Paul explains in Romans 15:18-21 that his desire was to proclaim the Good News in places where it has not yet been proclaimed; this was one of the reasons getting to Rome was not the top priority for him as he wrote this letter. We do not know when the church in Rome came to be, but if you look through the list of pilgrims on the day of Pentecost, you see it included people from Rome (Acts 2:10). Paul must have already known some of the members of the church there; their names are listed in Romans 16:3-15. This would be expected, for all roads led to Rome. People were constantly moving around the empire; many would very naturally end up in the capital city.

It stands to reason that Paul was preparing the way for his visit by explaining the Gospel to them in this letter. As he did so, Paul put down a summary of the Good News of Jesus Christ in greater detail than we have it anywhere else in the New Testament.

Of course, we know that Paul’s plans to visit Rome did not work out as he had hoped. While going about his ministry, he was arrested in Jerusalem and placed in jail. Paul, as a Roman citizen, asked for a hearing before the emperor, and so off to Rome he was taken...as a prisoner. He was eventually martyred there.

When Christians “rediscovered” letters like Romans during the time of the Protestant Reformation, the church of the time was turned upside down. People of faith, led by pioneers like Martin Luther, realized they could not earn their salvation through works. Through the cross of Jesus Christ, God pronounced guilty sinners innocent.

The message of the book might be summarized in the following way:

1. We all need to get right with God (1-3:23)
2. God did it all (3:24-5)
3. The pathway to living differently (chapters 6-8)
4. God knows what he’s doing (chapters 9-11)
5. We are saved together (chapters 12-15)

Lesson for October 5: *Everyone is Lost in Sin/People Are Broken*

Background Passage: Romans 1:16-3:20

Focal Passage: Romans 1:18-25, 28-32; 3:9-10

Lesson for October 12: *God Loves Sinners/God Loves You*

Background Passage: Romans 3:21-5:21

Focal Passage: Romans 5:6-19

Lesson for October 19: *All Christians Struggle with Sin/The Struggle Remains*

Background Passage: Romans 7:7-25

Focal Passage: Romans 7:9-25

Lesson for October 26: *The Holy Spirit is Essential to a Holy Life/You Need the Spirit*

Background Passage: Romans 8:1-30

Focal Passage: Romans 8:5-17, 26-27

Lesson for November 2: *Jesus is the Only Savior*

Background Passage: Romans 9:30-10:15

Focal Passage: Romans 9:30-10:15

Key themes found in Romans

1. **GRACE.** God had to do it. God's grace is free; we cannot earn it. At the same time, we must never take that grace for granted. The theme of grace can be traced through the letter via the following verses: 1:7; 2:4; 3:24, 27; 4:16; 5:15, 17, 21; 6:1, 15; 11:5-6
2. **FAITH.** We receive God's free gift by faith in Christ. It's not just a matter of believing about him; it's a matter of obeying Christ and confessing Christ as Lord. The following are some of Paul's references to faith in the letter: 1:5; 1:16-17; 3:22, 26-31; 4:1-25; 5:1; 10:8-11; 10:17.
3. **JUSTIFICATION.** This word comes from the setting of law courts. God acquits – justifies – the sinner, pronouncing the sinner “righteous” through what Christ has done in the place of the sinner: 1:17; 3:21-26; 4:1-25; 5:8-11, 15-21; 10:1-10.
4. **TOGETHERNESS.** Paul speaks of the truth that we sin and that we are saved together. He uses the analogy of the body as a way of showing how closely we must work with one another. Paul gives us guidelines as we struggle with the things which upset and divide the church: 14:1-15:7.
5. **GOD IS KING.** In spite of the fact that people may not believe, God continues to rule in the world: Romans 9-10.

A Simple Outline of Romans

- I. Why I Am Writing (1:1-17)
- II. We Are All Sinners (1:18-3:20)
- III. God Found A Way (3:21-5:21)
- IV. The New Life (6:1- 8:39)
- V. But What About the Jews? (9:1-11:36)
- VI. Live it Out! (12:1-15:13)
- VII. My Plans for the Future (15:14-33)
- VIII. So Many Friends in Rome (16:1-27)

