

# Paul's Letter to the Romans



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Coventry BCDM 2023

## **Paul' Letter to the Romans 2023**

- Session 1    *Introducing the questions; Paul and the Church in Rome*  
The Apostle and his Audience (Rom 1.1-17; 15.14-16.24)
- Session 2    *The Human Predicament; Righteousness, Peace and Reconciliation*  
Paul's Gospel Part 1 (Rom. 1.18-5.11):
- Session 3    *The Story of Salvation*  
Paul's Gospel Part 2 (Rom. 5.12-8.39):
- Session 4    *God's Choice of Israel*  
Interlude or the heart of the letter? (Rom. 9.1-11.36)
- Session 5    *Advice for Living*  
Living as the new community created by the Gospel (Rom. 12.1-15.13)

### *Learning Objectives:*

By the end of the module you will have:

- Engaged in detail with the text of Romans
- Have an understanding of Paul's core message in Romans
- Developed skills in using a method to interpret a text
- Be more confident in reading and interpreting a whole New Testament letter

### *In advance of the module, please read:*

- The text of the letter itself (don't worry if you don't understand it – the aim is to get at least a little sense of the flow of the letter as a whole)
- The introductory material on Romans from Cooke *New Testament* (p 8-14, 'Going Deeper With Romans' handout, 2021, or p229-239 in ch 6 of Cooke *New Testament*)
- The Five Narrative Critical Questions of a Text, and apply the questions to Philemon

## 1. Introducing the Questions; Paul and the Church in Rome

### a) The Shape of Romans

Romans falls in to five main sections: a very short introduction which introduces the theme: a statement of Paul's Gospel, where he outlines the good news of Jesus as he understands it; an interlude where he considers what the implications and consequences for the Jewish people might be; a practical section which encourages his hearers to change the way they behave in the light of the good news; and a final section where Paul shares his future plans with the Romans.

#### **1.1-17 – Introduction: Greeting and Headline Summary**

#### **1.18-8.39 – Paul's Gospel**

#### ***9.1-11.36 – Interlude: God's Choice of Israel***

#### **12.1-15.13 – Advice for living**

#### **15.14-16.24 - Reasons for Writing and Closing Remarks**

**b) 16.1-33 - Greetings and Paul's Intended visit to Rome**

In Romans 16.3-15 we meet the Church in Rome as it was known to Paul. The names seem to fall into several distinct groups:

- Prisca and Aquila, my kinspeople (ie Jews) who were in prison with me, they are prominent among the apostles, and they were in Christ before I was. A church meets in their house.
- Epaenetus, who was the first convert in Asia for Christ
- Mary, who has worked very hard among you
  
- Andronicus and Junia, my relatives who were in prison with me; they are prominent among the apostles, and they were in Christ before I was.
- Ampliatus, my beloved in the Lord
- Urbanus, our co-worker in Christ
- my beloved Stachys
- Apelles, who is approved in Christ
  
- those who belong to the family of Aristobulus
- my relative Herodion
  
- those who belong to the family of Narcissus
- those workers in the Lord, Tryphaena and Tryphosa
- the beloved Persis, who has worked hard in the Lord.
- Rufus, chosen in the Lord
- Rufus' mother—a mother to me also
  
- Asyncritus
- Phlegon
- Hermes
- Patrobas
- Hermas
- and the brothers and sisters who are with them
  
- Philologus
- Julia
- Nereus and his sister
- Olympas
- and all the saints who are with them
  
- Who are these people, and why do you think they might be grouped like this?
  
- Note Paul's parting words (Rom. 16.17-20) and his companions (Rom. 16.21-23, especially Tertius!)

**c) 15.14-25 – Paul's Purpose**

- What are Paul's purpose and circumstances here?

1. *Author/audience - who's speaking, who's listening?*
2. *Characters – who's acting?*
3. *Settings – where and when?*
4. *Plot – what's happening and why?*

- Rom. 15.19 – 'from Jerusalem round to Illyricum I have fully proclaimed/fulfilled/accomplished (*peplerokenai*) the good news of Christ'
- Rom. 15.23-4, 25 - 'there is no further place for me in these regions I desire to come to you... when I go to Spain...At present I am going to Jerusalem'.



The 'arc of the covenant'?

#### d) 1.1-17 – Opening and Headline

- 1.1-7 – Greeting: a long one! (cp. 1 Cor. 1.1-3) (– he doesn't mention a church (*ekklesia*) as such...v.7).
- What are the differences from Philemon?

1. *Author/audience - who's speaking, who's listening?*
2. *Characters – who's acting?*
3. *Settings – where and when?*
4. *Plot – what's happening and why?*
5. *Rhetoric – how?*

- Note the 'credal statement' in vv.2-5

- 1.8-15 – eagerness to arrive; the Gentile nature of the church in Rome
- 1.16-17 – headline and summary: 'the righteous will live by faith'

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