



slavery

*romans
part one*

Introduction to Romans

How we're going to tackle it

We're going to be doing Romans in four chunks throughout the year, interspersed by other series. Here are the four chunks we'll do it in:

- Romans 1-4 - Stripping mankind bare
- Romans 5-8 - Life...but not as you know it
- Romans 9-11 - Israel...
- Romans 12-16 - Transformation

Check out the appendix for an overview of how the book of Romans is structured.

There are two sections for each week. The Personal Preparation for you to do during the week, and the discussion questions for when you get together. Your discussion will be much better if you do the personal preparation - it'll take you about 10 mins, 3 times a week. A good habit to get into.

Background

Author: Paul (1.1)

Date: Written when he was about to go to Jerusalem with the collection (15.25), after he had fully preached the gospel in Asia round to Greece (15.19) ie end of 3rd missionary journey. AD 55-57.

Place of writing: Probably Corinth

Recipients: The saints in Rome (1.7), not a specific church or person. Addresses Gentiles (1:6, 13, 11.13-32, 15:1-12) and Jews (2:17, 3:9). Paul had not visited Rome, but knew many people there and knew local issues (i.e. Jew / Gentile tensions).

Purpose: It's hard to know exactly why Paul writes, as he never tells us (15:15). Some have said it was personal reasons Paul wrote. Either to introduce himself to the Roman church to get their support for his trip to Spain (15:24), or as a rehearsal of what he was going to say when he got to Rome (15:30-33).

Some have suggested it had nothing to do with Paul's personal situation, but everything to do with the situation in Rome - more specifically the tension between Jews & Gentiles.

At the end of the day, we don't know exactly, but it's most likely that Paul had a number of reasons for writing. What we do know is that Romans is the most thorough explanation of the Gospel we have. So whatever Paul's purpose, it's going to be a challenging and informing year as we study it.

Personal Preparation

Week 1 - Romans 1:1-17 - The Gospel

Day 1 - Read Romans 1:1-7

Consider

- What's the content of the Gospel from Paul's opening paragraph?
- What's the relationship between Jesus and the Gospel?
- What does Paul see as his relationship to Jesus and the Gospel?
- What might it mean to have grace and peace from the Father & the Lord Jesus?

Reflect

- This is a major letter for Paul. How does the way he starts it reflect his priorities?

Pray

- That we we might be clear about what the Gospel is.
- That we might be understand & experience the grace and peace of God.

Day 2 - Read Romans 1:8-15

Consider

- What is Paul thankful for in the Roman Christians?
- What is Paul praying and longing for the Roman Christians?
- What does Paul see his obligation as, and to whom?

Reflect

- Why do you think Paul wants to preach the Gospel (v.15) to those who are already Christians? (v.7)

Pray

- That we might thankful to God through Jesus for the faith that we have.
- That our understanding of the Gospel might deepen our relationship with God.

Day 3 - Read Romans 1:16-17

These verses are considered to be the summary statement of Paul's letter to the Romans.

Consider

- Why is Paul not ashamed of the Gospel?
- Why does he draw distinction between Jew & Gentile?
- How is 'the righteousness of God' revealed in the Gospel?

Reflect

- Paul quotes Habakkuk 2:4 in verse 17, and he's already made a distinction between Jews & Gentiles (v.16). What connection do you think he's drawing with the way God has dealt with people in the past, and the way God is dealing with people in the present?

Pray

- That we might understand the power and significance of Jesus' death and resurrection.

Week 2 - Romans 1:18-32 - Idolatry Part 1: Creation

From here up until 3:20, Paul strips mankind back to their bare essentials, and show that all of us at our core fall short of God. Of the audiences he writes to, there are two groups - Jews & Gentiles. The privilege of being exposed first goes to the godless gentiles.

Day 1 - Read Roman 1:18-23

Consider

- Why does God's wrath exist?
- Why does mankind have no excuse?
- What did they seek instead of God?

Reflect

- In what ways does Romans say the existence and some aspects of God's character are made plain to the world?
- Do you think this description of the world is accurate today?

Pray

- That we might honour God by not ignoring Him.
- That we might not confuse ignoring God for wisdom.

Day 2 - Read Romans 1:24-27

Consider

- God's wrath is often seen as an active punishment, but how is it described in the first paragraph?
- What is the alternative in the first paragraph to accepting the truth about God?
- What does God giving the world up to their sin look like?

Reflect

- Is sexual expression seen as freedom or punishment by people? Why?
- Do you think people receive 'due penalty for their error' in the area of sexual relations?

Pray

- That we wouldn't serve cheap imitations, but the God who creates all things.
- That we wouldn't be sucked into thinking that short-term pleasure is always good.

Day 3 - Read Romans 1:28-32

Consider

- How does God treat those who walk away from Him?
- What are the characteristics they inherit when they walk away from God?
- What is the final condemnation Paul gives this group?

Reflect

- Do you think the characteristics listed here describe everyone?
- Do you think these characteristics exist in some way in all people?
- Why would people who have these characteristics approve of them in others?

Pray

- That we would not give up our knowledge of God and so abandon goodness.
- That we would not condone evil in others merely to excuse ourselves.

Week 3 - Romans 2:1-16 - Idolatry Part 2: Morality

Paul changes tone in this section, and he changes the (imaginary) audience he is arguing against. As where in 1:18-32 he argued against 'they' (Gentiles), here he changes to 'you' (singular) most likely meaning Jews. What he's going to argue from 2:1-3:8 is that being moral, religious or a Jew doesn't help you one iota.

Day 1 - Read Romans 2:1-5

Consider

- What is the problem that Paul sees in people sitting in judgement upon others?
- What attitude does God have to people who think themselves morally superior?
- How is their moral 'superiority' presuming upon God's kindness?
- How will the morally 'superior' come out on the day of God's righteous judgement?

Reflect

- Do you see morality leading to judgementalism in people today?
- Are there areas in your life where you sit in judgement upon others while you know you fall short?

Pray

- That we would understand our own nature before we are tempted to sit in judgement upon others.

Day 2 - Read Romans 2:6-11

Consider

- We've just heard (v.1-5) that in the future we will see the 'righteous judgement of God'. From the first and the last sentence here, what will God base that judgement on?
- Paul has mentioned Jews & Gentiles before in Romans (1:16). Why does he mention it here?
- What is the relationship between 'the truth' and good deeds in this passage?

Reflect

- What role does obedience play in people's lives according to Paul?
- What would it look like to be obedient to the truth, or to be obedient to unrighteousness?

Pray

- That we might be willing to listen to the truth God says about us, and submit to it.
- That we might not be ruled by our sinful nature, but pursue glory, honor and immortality.

Day 3 - Read Romans 2:12-16

Paul has just stated that God shows no partiality in His judgement (v.11). But surely having the law matters...

Consider

- It's not possession of the law that justifies anyone...what is it?
- What does Paul say about Gentiles and 'law' here?
- What evidence will God use in his judgement of people on the last day?

Reflect

- How do you feel about God knowing your inmost secrets and judging you accordingly?
- Are you ever tempted to feel like you have a special place before God because of what you know?

Pray

- Give thanks that even though God knows exactly what we're like, he still sent Jesus to die for us.

Week 4 - Romans 2:17-3:8 - Idolatry Part 3: Religion

Day 1 - Read Romans 2:17-24

Consider

- Paul let's rip at his 'imaginary' Jewish opponent in this section. From the first half (v.17-20), what are the claims his Jewish opponent is making about himself?
- What's the problem Paul has with these claims?
- For those who are boasting in having the law yet break it, what effect does this have on God and people's view of God?

Reflect

- What does your behaviour, your attitude toward others, the way you speak about others say of your understanding and regard for God?
- What do you think other people think of God because of your life?

Pray

- Pray that we would understand our failures & shortcomings and be humble because of them.
- Pray that our behaviour - both failures and successes - would bring glory to God.

Day 2 - Read Romans 2:25-29

Consider

- What is the value of circumcision, according to Paul?
- At what point does circumcision become meaningless?
- What makes a person a 'true' Jew?

Reflect

- Just as the Jews sometimes relied on their heritage as advance standing before God, do you think Australians have the same problem as a 'Christian' country?
- Are you ever tempted to see what you 'do' as a Christian as getting you into God's good books?

Pray

- That we might never rely on heritage, ceremony to establish or maintain our relationship with God.
- That we might understand what it is that God requires from us clearly - obedience to Jesus.

Day 3 - Read Romans 3:1-8

Consider

- What advantage does Paul consider in being a Jew?
- How does Paul contrast the Jews and God in verses 3-4?
- What is the objection Paul's 'opponent' raises in verses 5-8?
- How does Paul answer?

Reflect

- How can God be faithful even when condemning people for sin?
- Do you have a problem with the way God judges or handles the world?

Pray

- That we would understand God's hatred for sin, but his patience with mankind.
- That we would trust that God will call all people to account for their actions.

Study 1 - Romans 1:1-17 - The Gospel

To start: If you were to list the key elements of the Christian Gospel¹, what would they be and why?

(Discuss as a group what you put down and why.)

Read Romans 1:1-17

What's the content of the Gospel according to Paul?
(Verses 1-6)

How does it match with your list above?

Why might he include (or leave out) the things he does?

What does it mean to be called?

What's Paul's motivation in all of this?

What's his relationship to God & Jesus?

What's his relationship to the Gospel?

What's his motivation towards the Romans?

Why is the Gospel good news? (Verses 16-17)

For people?

For God?

For living?

Bringing it home

What makes it hard to believe the Gospel is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes?

Are you as motivated by the truth of the Gospel as Paul is?

¹ Gospel literally means 'good news' in the original greek.

Study 2 - Romans 1:18-32 - Idolatry Part 1: Creation

To start: What's your definition of idolatry? What are some examples of idolatry that you could point to?

Read Romans 1:18-32

What is sin according to this passage.

What is it theologically? (v.21-23)

What does it look like in practice?

Are people free?

Where does it ultimately lead? (v.32)

Describe how God punishes people.

Are people free?

Do we see God punishing like this today?

What should the world know about God?

What should be 'plain' to people? (v.19)

What knowledge of God is it? (v.28)

What is God's righteous decree? (v.32)

Bringing it home

In what ways is creation worshipped in Australia? Are there ways in which you worship creation?

Do you think that people go out of their way to suppress knowledge of God?

Is there a difference between personal expression & sin?

Study 3 - Romans 2:1-16 - Idolatry Part 2: Morality

To Start: What does it mean to describe someone as a 'moral' person? Is it a compliment?

Read Romans 2:1-16

What is God's issue with people² in verses 1-5?

Is there ever a place for passing judgement on others?

What's the difference between God's judgement and ours?

How is judging others showing contempt for God's kindness?

What's God's judgement based on in verses 6-11?

What's the connection between truth and good works?

Why does Paul mention Jews & Gentiles?

Does God not showing favouritism the same as God not favouring people?

Does having (or even knowing) the Law make people right? (verses 12-16)

What's the difference between the law for the Jews and the law for the Gentiles?

What's the ultimate end for those under the law and those not under the law?

What would it look like to 'obey the law'?

Bringing it home

How do you see morality being idolatry in Australia? Do you see it in your own life?

Isn't this passage suggesting that we can be right with God through pursuing good?

How do you think you'd go if God judged your innermost secrets by the standard you expected of others?

² See the Personal Preparation, but he's changing audience here to be talking primarily to 'Jews', and possibly God-fearing Gentiles.

Study 4 - Romans 2:17-3:8 - Idolatry Part 3: Religion

To Start: What does it mean to describe someone as a 'moral' person? Is it a compliment?

Read Romans 2:17-3:8

What is the problem Paul has with the Jews and their thinking about the Law in verses 17-24?

Why do the Jews think they'll avoid God's judgement?

What happens to people's opinion of God because of the Jews attitude?

Are there parallels between the ways the Jews think, and the way you think?

What's the purpose of circumcision in verses 25-29? (Or any outward sign of religion...)

What would it look like to be religious but not know God?

What is 'true' circumcision?

Is there something wrong with being outwardly religious? (i.e. circumcision)

What are the objections of Paul's 'opponent' in verses 1-8, and what does Paul answer?

Is God's punishment of Israel an example of a failed OT covenant? (Gen 12:1-3)

If our aim is to make God look good...what's wrong with doing that by sinning?

Is God's faithfulness important?

Bringing it home

How do you see religion being idolatry in Australia? Do you see it in your own life?

What would it look like to have a relationship with God, but not be religious?

How would you answer someone who brought God's faithfulness into question because of the evil in the world?

Opening 1.1-17	<p>1.1-7 Prescript</p> <p>1. Thankgiving and occasion: Paul and the Romans</p> <p>1.16-17 The theme of the Letter</p>
The Heart of the Gospel: Justification by Faith 1.18-4.25	<p>1.18-3.20 Universal Reign of Sin</p> <p>2.1-3.8 The wrath of God and Jews</p> <p>3.9-20 The guilt of all humanity</p>
	<p>3.21-4.25 Justification by Faith</p> <p>3.27-4.25 By Faith Alone</p>
Assurance provided by the Gospel: The Hope of Salvation 5.1-8.39	5.1-21 The Hope of Glory
	6.1-14 Dead to sin thru union with Christ
	6.15-23 Freed from Bondage and Sin
	7.1-6 Released from the Law, joined to Christ
	7.7-25 The History and experience of the Jews
	8.1-30 Assurance of eternal life in the Spirit
The Defense of the Gospel: The Problem of Israel. 9.1-11.36	8.31-39 Believers Security Celebrated
	9.1-5 Intro
	9.6-13 The Israel within Israel
	9.14-15 Objections: The freedom and purpose of God
	9.16-29 Israel's Past Election
	9.30-10.21 Israel's Present: Disobedience
	10.14-21 Israel's lack of excuse
11.1-10 Israel's Present: Remnant	
Transforming Power of the Gospel: Conduct 12.1-15.13	12.1-2 Heart of Matter: Total transformation
	12.3-8 Humility and Mutual service
	12.9-21 Love and its Manifestations
	13.1-7 The christian and secular rulers
	13.8-10 Love and the Law
	13.11-14 Living in the light of the Day
	14.1-15.13 A plea for unity
Closing 15.14-16.27	15.14-33 Paul's ministry and travel plans
	16.1-23 Greetings

Notes...