

The Village Church – Rancho Santa Fe
Adult Bible Study – Week #1 – 2026 & 2027

Romans 1:1-13

September 15 & 16, 2026

Why We Read the Bible

Introduction to The Letter of Paul to the Romans

1. Written between 54-58 AD
2. The “longest, weightiest...and most influential of Paul’s correspondence”
3. All of Paul’s letters were theology in context, meant for practicing Christians
4. Writing to Rome meant addressing those who lived in the political, military, economic capital of Paul’s world
5. The overall subject: The relationship of Creation to its Creator and Lord
6. Cultural Milieu
 - a. Platonism – taught that the world has 2 realities: material and spiritual (bad and good)
 - b. Stoicism – taught that moral and good life is achieved by removing your need for the physical world
 - c. Hedonism – taught that the good life is achieved by exploiting the physical world for all it is worth
 - d. Rabbinic Judaism – especially since the fall of Jerusalem, taught that the good life is obtained within God’s covenant with Israel and the Law that accompanied it
 - e. Prophets of Judaism – taught that God is in control of history; history is going somewhere; the shape of all reality is historical, and meaningful life is lived within this reality
 - f. Gnosticism – taught that the shape of reality is such that humans inhabit space which straddles the realm of Spirit (which is good) and Matter (which is bad)
7. The Christian message – according to Paul
 - a. Jesus:
 - i. Is the fulcrum between the Old and New Age (as taught by the Prophets)
 - ii. Is the beginning of something new from out of the old
 - iii. Ushers in the Kingdom of God
 - b. Humans:
 - i. Are creatures of God
 - ii. Must be controlled or “lorded over” by someone/something
 - iii. Can have real life only in relationship with the real God

Romans 1:1-7

8. A customary formula for beginning letters – but somewhat expanded
9. From Paul (and not from any others)
10. Paul is a:
 - a. Servant / Slave of Jesus Christ
 - b. Apostle / Messenger of Jesus Christ
 - c. Commissioned (set apart) for this work of being a Servant and Apostle
11. The majority of the passage is a comprehensive Christological (about Christ) statement
 - a. The Gospel – the good news – of God
 - b. Rooted in the past – the prophets
 - c. About the Son of God
 - d. Who is from the Davidic line (in terms of the flesh)
 - e. And who is from God (in terms of the Spirit)

- f. The key event in all this is the Resurrection
- g. Jesus is the Christ (Messiah, Anointed)
- h. Jesus is Lord – the one in charge!
- i. Jesus is the crux (cross) of the relationship between Creator and Creation
- j. Jesus is the source of grace (the unmerited and never-ending favor of God)
- k. Jesus is the source of mission – the good news is about him
- l. The mission is not to Jews only, but also/equally so to the Gentiles (everyone else)
- m. The point of the missions is so that all people will believe, trust, and live in the new reality created and embodied by Jesus Christ
- n. The Christians in Rome are already in this new reality
- o. The gospel is about grace (Greek – *charis*) – a thought and traditional greeting from the Gentile world
- p. The gospel is about peace (Hebrew – *shalom*) – a thought and traditional greeting from the Jewish world
- q. The upshot: Jesus Christ is for all people

Romans 1:8-13

- 12. Here is Paul's statement of respect for the already established church in Rome
- 13. There already is a relationship between Paul and this church (though he has never been there) based on prayer
- 14. Paul plans to visit
- 15. Paul's purpose in visiting:
 - a. Mutual encouragement and sharing about spiritual matters
 - b. Enlisting the support of the Roman Christians so that Paul can go on in his mission – probably to Spain and beyond (but this plan of Paul's will not happen – he will be imprisoned and then executed in Rome)

Questions for Your Life Today

- A. How would you express an understanding of the entire structure of reality and your place within it?
- B. Paul was called to the work of an apostle. To what has God called you?
- C. How do we mutually encourage each other in the faith today?
- D. How might grace and peace inform and transform your life today?
- E. What does it mean to you that Jesus is so much more than merely "your personal Lord and Savior?"

Notes by The Rev. Dr. Jack Baca, Senior Pastor, The Village Church, Rancho Santa Fe, California

Primary Source: Romans, Interpretation Commentary, Paul Achtemeier

Other Sources: The Message of Romans, The Bible Speaks Today, and Romans: God's Good News for the World, both by John Stott and The Epistle to the Romans, Harper's New Testament Commentaries, C.K. Barrett