

# lesson one

JUNE 26–JULY 3

## *Paul and* **Rome**

---

*“First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world” (Rom. 1:8, NKJV).*



Rom. 1:1–8

## Introduction

# What Is in the Heart of Love?

Paul, the great apostle, missionary, and proclaimer of Jesus' gospel, had a plan and a hope dear to his own heart. This plan was that the already established Christian church would be a solid fixture in Rome and a gateway to spreading the gospel over Italy and Spain.<sup>1</sup>

---

**There are messages within this ancient letter that we can apply to our own lives.**

---

In Paul's time, Rome was the megacity of the known world, the desirable travel destination for all who were part of the Roman Empire. Mostly, Paul's ministry occurred in places where Christ had not been preached (Rom. 15:20) so that he would help fulfill the Scripture in Isaiah 52:15, "To whom He was not announced, they shall see; And those who have not heard shall understand" (Rom. 15:21, NKJV).

Yet, as he entered Corinth, Paul had time to contemplate his future plans of ministering in Rome, and it is here that he wrote the letter to the Romans with the purpose of paving the way for his future visit.<sup>2</sup> Paul wrote not only with the object of creating a partnership with the Christians in Rome but also to clearly state the main principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ and his position on the main issues of contention between the Jewish and Gentile churches of the time.

Although Paul's letter was specifically written to the Christian church in Rome, its message has astounding relevance to our own Christian walk today. The black-and-white statements within this letter explain the character of a true Christian who has been reborn of water and of the Spirit (John 3:5).

We are shown that we should "walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:4, NKJV), knowing that our "old man" has been done away with (verse 6). We are told that we can do this by "being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:6, NKJV).

Through prayerfully reading one of the most complete statements of Paul's faith, written with the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, we can further open our own eyes and hearts to the fullness of life in Jesus Christ.

---

1. *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 373.

2. *Ibid.*

Logos  
People—  
Paul's Passion

Acts 28:17–31;  
Rom. 1:7; 15:14, 20–27;  
Ephesians 1;  
Phil. 1:12

**Passion for People (Acts 28:17–31; Rom. 3:9; Romans 15)**

Many believe Romans was written from “Corinth during Paul’s three-month stay in that city on his Third Missionary Journey,”<sup>1</sup> before Paul had visited the city. He writes to two distinct groups in Rome: Christian believers and skeptical Jews. His message, however, is the same: “Salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.”

---

**When Paul spoke, people listened.**

---

Paul was deeply rooted in his Hebrew heritage and had fought tirelessly against the early Christian church before his famous conversion. Once his eyes were opened not only to Christ’s love for him but for the world, his mission expanded to encompass all people. For Paul, this passion for people extended beyond Christian believers to his people, the Jews. Much of Romans is laced with a pleading to those God had earlier chosen, ordained, and set apart.

Yet on what became Paul’s final missionary journey, the Jews incited a riot in Jerusalem, accusing him of turning people away from Judaism. Paul was arrested and imprisoned. Yet his heart still yearned for his Jewish brothers and sisters: “In this letter Paul gave free expression to his burden on behalf of the Jews. Ever since his conversion, he had longed to help his Jewish brethren gain a clear understanding of the gospel message. ‘My heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is,’ he declared, ‘that they might be saved.’”<sup>2</sup>

As he traveled, Paul witnessed, served, and ministered to a diversity of people. Each time, he would point them home, to heaven and the Savior.

**The Big Idea (Romans 1; Romans 8; Ephesians 1)**

*It doesn’t matter who you are. Christ loves you and died for you.* Paul loved sharing this simple message. Yes, there were more details he discussed with those who would listen, but the big idea was simple: salvation through Jesus Christ alone. That is the idea that took him to Rome. This was the message he was preaching when a riot erupted from an angry mob of Jews in Jerusalem. This was the message he preached along his final missionary journey. Everywhere Paul went, individuals were drawn to him because of his Savior. “Through all the ages the great truth of justification by faith has stood as a mighty beacon to guide repentant sinners into the way of life.”<sup>3</sup>

Paul had the heart of a teacher. It didn’t matter who he was with, he wanted to teach them, no, *show* them Jesus Christ. He wanted this so badly that he would speak for hours—sometimes right through the night—just to explain

the big idea: God's undying love for us.

Romans contains numerous links to the Old Testament. Drawing on his Jewish roots, Paul thrives on connecting his people's history and faith to the message of Jesus Christ.

### **Open Doors (Rom. 3:21–31; Ephesians 1; Philippians 1)**

When Paul spoke, people listened. The words he shared about Jesus Christ and the salvation offered through His blood touched hearts wherever Paul went. Everywhere he went there were open doors, obviously prepared by the Holy Spirit, through which to minister to those keen on hearing of Jesus' redeeming grace.

An important aspect of Romans is Paul's message that the gospel was to include the Gentiles. "In his epistle to the Romans, Paul set forth the great principles of the gospel. He stated his position on the questions which were agitating the Jewish and the Gentile churches, and showed that the hopes and promises which had once belonged especially to the Jews were now offered to the Gentiles also."<sup>4</sup> Time was of the essence, and Paul wanted to make sure he made himself clear. Regardless of who might read the letter—a group of believers in Rome around A.D. 61, or you and I in the twenty-first century—his only desire was that anyone who read his letter would see the vivid picture of salvation through Christ alone and accept Him.

### **Mentoring the Future (Romans 16)**

Although we might ask how Paul may have known so many people in Rome before he visited there, his message in chapter 16 is clear: he is part of a team. Paul's ministry involves a group of diverse individuals walking and working alongside him—each aiding the mission work and extending the message of salvation.

The church in Rome (Rom. 16:3–16) was an extension of his team, and he was thrilled at the mere idea of spending time with them. But Paul's mentoring goes further. Verses 17–20 read like a father's heartfelt concern for his children: "watch out . . . keep away from . . . full of joy over you" (NIV).

And finally, as he wraps up his letter to the believers in Rome, Paul sends greetings from those currently working alongside him (verses 21–24). Again, his words are filled with encouragement, praise, and joy—words of a true mentor and disciple maker.

Paul's every word and action are focused on developing disciples of Jesus Christ—individuals prepared to grow in Jesus Christ and further His kingdom.

---

1. *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 467.  
2. *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 374.  
3. *Ibid.*, p. 373.  
4. *Ibid.*

*The Miracle of Freedom*John 8:32–36;  
Rom. 8:1–17

In a zoo, an animal's freedom is suppressed by a cage. The creature struggles to break free, even though it is fed and cared for. Likewise most people have the desire to be free from their sinful nature. But only Jesus can release us from this "cage." Paul discusses the subject of sinfulness and God's grace that supersedes it. Freedom from the condemnation of sin is the propositional statement in Romans 8:1–17, which he tries to explain to the church in Rome. Because sinful flesh is weak, it cannot achieve the righteous demands of the law. Condemnation is therefore inevitable (Rom. 8:1–4). He then says that God's grace is sufficient to save humanity.

---

### Sinful nature is a cage in which humans are trapped.

---

"In the change that takes place when the soul surrenders to Christ, there is the highest sense of freedom. The expulsion of sin is the act of the soul itself. True, we have no power to free ourselves from Satan's control; but when we desire to be set free from sin, and in our great need cry out for a power out of and above ourselves, the powers of the soul are imbued with the divine energy of the Holy Spirit. . . .

"The only condition upon which the freedom of man is possible is that of becoming one with Christ."<sup>1</sup>

This freedom we receive when we let Jesus take charge of our lives results in many wonderful benefits. "When Christ reigns in the soul there is purity, freedom from sin. The glory, the fullness, the completeness of the gospel plan is fulfilled in the life. The acceptance of the Saviour brings a glow of perfect peace, perfect love, perfect assurance."<sup>2</sup>

This "perfect peace" is another benefit of letting Jesus take charge of our lives; and as long as He remains in us, the wall of sinful nature remains broken. His presence in our lives weakens its power. We "are not under God's wrath; there is no condemnation upon us."<sup>3</sup>

A third benefit of letting Jesus take charge of our lives is that we are adopted into God's family (Rom. 8:14–17).

Yes, sinful nature is a cage in which humans are trapped. But Romans 8:1–17 offers us assurance of freedom in Christ.

---

1. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 466.

2. *Messages to Young People*, p. 166.

3. D. Martin Lloyd-Jones, *Romans: An Exposition of Chapter 7:1–8:4: The Law—Its Functions and Limits* (Edinburgh, Great Britain: Banner of Truth, 1995), p. 260.

## Evidence

Amazing Man—  
Life-Giving Message

Rom. 1:1

Paul describes himself in Romans as “a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God” (Rom. 1:1, NIV). And so he was. He was born in Tarsus, a city near the southern coast of what is now Turkey. A trade center with various cultures mixed within its boundaries, it “was the city whose institutions best and most completely united the oriental and western character.”<sup>1</sup> In such a setting, Paul would have been exposed to varying cultures and worldviews. He spoke Greek, Aramaic, and Latin and was educated by the Jewish

---

**Throughout is repeated the theme of salvation by faith—  
not by works.**

---

scholar and Pharisee Gamaliel. Paul was zealous for the Jewish faith, and his eagerness and quick mind provided him with an extensive knowledge of Scripture. Thus, even before his dramatic conversion (Acts 9), he seems to have been chosen and equipped by Jesus to spread the gospel to people of all walks of life.

After his conversion, Paul became fully devoted to sharing the gospel primarily with the Gentiles. The zeal that this “slave of Christ” had for Christianity and the impact he made on those around him was remarkable. (*Doulos*, the Greek word for *slave*, is also translated as “servant.”<sup>2</sup>)

Thirteen of the letters in the New Testament were written by Paul. The book of Romans was one of them, and in it can be found the most complete statement of the message he preached.<sup>3</sup> The letter was written to the Christians in Rome to prepare the way for a visit he wanted to make to the church on his way to Spain (Rom. 15:22–25). In the letter, he outlines humanity’s need of God’s salvation, the new life in Christ, God’s plan for Israel, and Christian conduct. Throughout is repeated the theme of salvation by faith—not by works.

**REACT**

1. In what ways have you been called by God? What talents and knowledge do you have that you can use in His service?
2. How can we remember that we are saved through faith in Jesus?

---

1. William M. Ramsay, *The Cities of St. Paul* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1949), p. 88.  
 2. Thomas A. Davis, *Romans for the Everyday Man* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald® Publishing Association, 1971), p. 14.  
 3. *Good News Bible, Special Edition* (Canberra, Australia: Lion Publishing, 1979), pp. 1108, 1109.

## How-to Faith That Shines!

Rom. 1:17;  
Eph. 1:15–23

This quarter, we will learn that Paul had a faith that shone far and wide. If “faith is . . . the evidence of things not seen,” how do we make it known? (Heb. 11:1, NKJV). Jesus said, “You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot

---

### A faith discovered is a faith shared.

---

be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven’ ” (Matt. 5:14–16, NIV).

Have you ever been out on a dark night and spotted the warm glow of light from a distance? How did that light make you feel? How would you like to be as inviting as warm firelight on a cold, dark night? Here are at least three ways to let your light shine and put your faith into action:

*Give thanks.* Read Ephesians 5:20. A life of faith is believing that God through His grace has provided for all your needs. Read Philippians 4:19. Some of the riches Jesus’ grace has supplied include eternal life, love, peace, and victory over sin. We can truly hand our worries and pain to Him and thank Him every moment for what He already has provided for us, and for what He will provide.

*Share your faith.* When Martin Luther discovered the remedy to his overbearing guilt, nothing would dampen his fervor. His bold sharing of the riches of God’s grace meant that the spark of faith in his heart had become a fire of revival that swept the world. A faith discovered is a faith shared. Ask God to show you how to share the riches of His providence with the people around you.

*Know the law’s proper place.* The law shows us how much we need God’s grace. However, following the law will never save us. Only through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit can we follow the law. Read Ephesians 2:8, 9 and Ezekiel 11:19, 20. Without judging others (Matt. 7:1, 2), we should teach them that having faith in Jesus can save them and that He will restore His image in them.

### REACT

1. What other steps can we take to live by faith and to claim God’s grace in our lives and the lives of people we contact daily?
2. If we are saved by faith, how should we approach keeping God’s law?

## Opinion

# Salvation Free for All

Some Christian denominations advocate that to get to heaven people must make penance for their sins. Similarly, the Jews of Jesus' time believed that observing their customs and the law would earn their way to heaven. This misconception prevented them from seeing the law as a law of love, from believing in Christ as the Son of God, and from acknowledging that accepting Jesus' sacrifice on the cross as their own is what truly saves a person.

### "Judgment looms under every steeple."

In Romans, however, Paul gives everyone a clear picture of what it means to be saved. He states that it is impossible to wipe away our sins by observing the law or by following rules and regulations. Only through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is this possible. It is important for us to surrender to God's leading every day. Salvation can be gained only through faith in Christ's sacrifice for us. So we must be careful not to hinder other people's faith by focusing on the dos and don'ts of religion rather than on the good news that salvation comes through faith.

Jewish laws and social customs also prevented the Jews from accepting the fact that Christ came to save everyone. The Jews believed that as a chosen nation they were the only ones entitled to salvation. Consequently, they looked down on everyone else. We, too, can be led astray in this way.

The song "Does Anybody Hear Her?" paints a clear picture of how we can forget that salvation is for everyone. The song tells the story of a troubled girl, searching for acceptance, love, and hope in church. Instead, she finds that "judgment looms under every steeple," with "lofty glances from lofty people," who "can't see past her scarlet letter," and who've "never even met her."\*

We should accept everyone who comes to church looking for something deeper. We should show them the true love and forgiveness God bestows on each of us. We must be careful not to judge them by the way they look, their background, or their past. We should remember that salvation is free to all who will accept Christ.

### **REACT**

1. How can you convey the message of salvation by faith to someone who might not believe in God or who just doesn't think too highly of "institutionalized religion"?
2. Do you think that only Christians or Adventists will be saved? Explain.

---

\* Casting Crowns, "Does Anybody Hear Her?" <http://www.sing365.com/music/lyric.nsf/Does-Anybody-Hear-Her-lyrics-Casting-Crowns/9B1D3B00309E8B5A4825707700105E6A> (accessed July 14, 2009).

## Exploration *We're All on the Same Team*

Rom. 15:1–7

### CONCLUDE

During all of Paul's ministry, we sense the urgency of his message—be unified in the salvation of Christ. Paul was a living example of the danger of putting human beliefs about following Christ above what Jesus said we should do. After his dramatic conversion on the road to Damascus, Paul saw that there is no division between Jew and Gentile, that our faith needs to be spoken of throughout the whole world. He had a passion for people, and though he was deeply rooted in Hebrew heritage, the strength of his ministry was his love for everyone, just as his Master had loved all people when He walked on the earth.

We, too, have a chance to share our faith with everyone, from the mail carrier to the person who sits next to us in class. Don't wait to share what you believe. You are an important part of the team of Jesus Christ. Salvation is for everyone!

### CONSIDER

- Gathering a group of friends to visit another denomination's young adult group. Find what you have in common in your beliefs about Jesus Christ's salvation and soon coming, and make plans to share your love for Jesus.
- Organizing a trip to your local soup kitchen to serve the homeless. Ask the Holy Spirit to give you a conversation starter so that you can share your love for Jesus with someone there.
- Looking through a current newspaper, either in print or online, to see what type of headlines the editors give the most space. Are the headlines about how people are working together or about how people are fighting over something? Try to find a positive article about people working together for a cause.
- Writing a letter to future generations about your experience in working with others to share the gospel. Tell a few stories about some difficulties you have had and how God has given you insight to overcome those difficulties.
- Interviewing five people, asking them to define *unity*. Share the results with your family or your Sabbath School class. Come up with your own definition in the context of Romans 15:1–7.
- Using watercolors or colored pencils, draw a picture of unity that you think Paul would understand and agree with, in the context of Romans 15:1–7.

### CONNECT

Max Lucado, *Life Lessons: The Book of Romans* (Nashville, Tenn.: Word Publishing Group, 1996).