

Covenant Life College - Paul's Letter to the Romans

Session 1—Introduction and Overview

February 10, 2008

1. Author—Paul wrote 13 epistles comprising almost one quarter of the New Testament.
2. Date—The most likely date is around 57 A.D. The letter was probably written from Corinth (Cf. Romans 15.22-29; Acts 20.3-6).
3. Recipients—both Jews and Gentiles, with a probable Gentile majority
4. Overview—This is longest of Paul's letters. It is really more of a theological treatise than a letter, bracketed by an opening section (1.1-17) and a conclusion (15.24-16.27)
 - a. The Opening of the Letter¹ (1.1-17)
 - i. Customary greeting and thanksgiving (1.1-15)
 - ii. Transitional statement of the letter's theme (1.16-17)
 - The gospel is the revelation of God's righteousness.
 - b. The Gospel—The Righteousness of God Received by Faith (1.18-4.25)
 - i. The reign of sin (1.18-3.20)
 - ii. Justification by faith (3.21-4.25)
 - c. The Gospel—The Power of God for Salvation (5.1-8.39)
 - i. The hope of glory (5.1-11)
 - ii. Comparison and contrast- Adam and Christ (5.12-21)
 - iii. Freedom from the bondage to sin (6.1-23)
 - iv. Freedom from bondage to the law (7.1-25)
 - v. Assurance of life in the Spirit and the believer's security (8.1-39)
 - d. The Gospel and Israel (9.1-11.36).
 - e. The Gospel and the Transformation of Life (12.1- 15.13).
 - f. Closing Issues—travel plans, greetings, etc. (15.14-16.27)

Many have pointed out the impact this letter has had down through the ages of the church's history. This letter figured significantly in the conversion of Augustine in the 4th century A.D., as he read from Romans 13. Then a thousand years later, an Augustinian monk was grappling with Paul's words in Romans 1, "The righteous shall live by faith." His name was Martin Luther. This letter was key in his own understanding of how a man can be right with God. Two centuries following this, a young Anglican clergyman named John Wesley was listening to Luther's preface to his commentary on Romans when "he felt his heart strangely warmed."

¹ Section heads taken from *An Introduction to the New Testament*, Carson, Moo and Morris, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 1992, pages 239-40.