

**Bible Study**



# **FORMED BY HIS GRACE**



**ROMANS 1:1-3:20**

Term 2, 2023

Trinity Church Brighton

# **The Book Of Romans: Formed By His Grace.**

## **Contents:**

Introduction	Page 2
Background Notes	Page 3
Sample COMA questions	Page 5
Romans 1:1-7, 16:25-27	Page 8
Romans 1:8-17	Page 10
Romans 1:18-32	Page 12
Romans 2:1-16	Page 14
Romans 2:17-29	Page 16
Romans 3:1-20	Page 18
End of term reflection	Page 20
Prayer Points	Page 22

## Introduction

It is almost impossible to overstate the impact of Paul's letter to the church in Rome. History shows us how influential the growth of Christianity at the heart of the Roman empire came to be. Romans has been most influential book of the Bible for some of the most influential leaders in church history, from Augustine in the fourth century to Calvin and Luther in the sixteenth century and many more in our day.

What is it about Romans that has been so impactful? Put simply, it is because Romans is about the gospel of Jesus Christ. As Christopher Ash helpfully sums up: it is "the Jesus-exulting, people-humbling gospel that Paul expounds in Romans." (Christopher Ash, *Teaching Romans*) Jesus is lifted high through the emphasis on the glorious grace of God in Christ. We are brought low as we learn of our need to humbly respond in faith knowing that we come empty handed to the cross. And as we see in Romans, that impacts us in two profound directions: it brings us in, as we recognise that we are united in Christ regardless of merit or ethnicity or worldly status. And it sends us out, as we learn of the universal need of all people to hear the call to respond in faith to God's amazing grace. What a wonderful book for us to work through slowly over the next two years!

Two years!? That long?! Well, sort of. There is so much to digest in Romans that we're tackling it in bite-sized morsels spread across 2023/24. Here's what this will look like in three chunks this year:

Romans 1:1-3:20	April 30 to June 4
Romans 3:21-5:21	September 10 to October 1
Romans 6:1-8:39	October 29 to December 3

To complement the preaching program in both personal reflection and Growth Group discussion, this booklet provides a few different ways of engaging with Romans:

- There is space for taking notes from the Sunday sermon and a few questions for personal reflection on that passage. These questions will be especially helpful as preparation ahead of studying the passage in Growth Groups. Many of these questions have been sourced from *Romans: Read, Mark, Learn* (details below), which is a resource provided to our Growth Group leaders.
- In addition to these questions that are specific to each passage we have included some sample COMA questions as a generic tool to engage with the text. More information on the COMA method and examples of other COMA questions for different parts of the Bible can be found in *One To One Bible Reading* by David Helm (Matthias Media).
- At the end of each section is a review page to consolidate understanding and reflect on application.
- At the back of the booklet there is space provided for recording prayer points. This is a great way to inform prayer through the week as well as giving opportunity to reflect on and give thanks for God's answers to prayer over the course of the year.

For those who like to dig deeper, here are a few great resources on Romans:

- *Introducing Romans* (Christopher Ash, Christian Focus Publishing). This is a very concise yet insightful introduction to the book as a whole.
- *Romans: Read, Mark, Learn* (St Helen's Church, Christian Focus Publishing) This is a guide for Bible study that highlights important things to note in the text and connects through to application.
- *The Message of Romans* (John Stott, The Bible Speaks Today Series). This is an excellent, accessible commentary.

## Background notes for the Book of Romans.

For all sorts of reasons Romans has probably had more books written about it than any other book in the Bible. If you found the relevant shelf at a Christian book shop you could get the impression that you can't possibly understand Romans without reading many, many books written about Romans. Of course, there is no doubt that we gain so much from reading what others have written about the Bible, but in God's wisdom he has given us all that we need to understand this great book within the pages of scripture.

So, for example, we know from Romans 1:1 that it was written by the Apostle Paul, whose conversion we read about in Acts 9. We know from 1:13 that at the time of writing Paul hadn't yet been to Rome, but from 15:19-25 it's clear that he's already completed extensive missionary work around the Mediterranean and was on his way to Jerusalem to deliver financial aid to the Christians there. Putting this all in the context of the missionary journeys recorded in Acts this places Paul late in his third journey, probably during his three month stay in Greece (Acts 20:2, 3). We can even make a guess that he was specifically in Corinth given the reference to Phoebe in 16:1 (Cenchreae was the Eastern port of Corinth) and Gaius and Erastus in 16:23 (see 1 Cor 1:14 re Gaius and Acts 19:22 and 2 Tim 4:20 re Erastus).

What do we know about the church in Rome? By the time Paul is writing, there had been Christians in Rome for many years (15:23), which is likely because there had been people from Rome present right back at Pentecost (Acts 2:10). In Acts 18:2 we learn that Paul met a couple of Jewish Christians who had fled Rome when Emperor Claudius had expelled the Jews from Rome. But by the time Paul writes Romans, Priscilla and Aquila have returned to Rome and are playing a leadership role there (16:5). All of this describes a scenario where Jewish Christians in Rome had been forced to leave by Claudius' edict, but the church continued to grow under Gentile leadership, with some of those Jewish Christians then returning some years later when the expulsion had concluded. This scenario gives us some context for Paul's concern for the unity and cohesion of Christians from Jewish and Gentile backgrounds. We can look to a book like Galatians to see similar concerns in a different context.

So, between Acts and Romans we can paint a picture of a church struggling with simmering tensions, which Paul seeks to address through the unifying message of the gospel of grace received through faith.

However, Paul is clear that he has another purpose in writing that extends beyond the cohesion of the Roman church itself, which he states in 15:23-33. Paul wants the Christians in Rome to join him as mission partners in the gospel. His eagerness to preach the gospel to them in person (1:15) and his lengthy explanation of the gospel in this letter both serve the same goal: the strength of their unity in the gospel of grace so that together they might contribute to the ongoing spread of that gospel throughout the world.

That's the summary that Paul begins and ends this magnificent book with: that the nations would be called to the obedience that comes from faith (1:5, 16:26). And is evident time and again throughout the letter, this is all by God's grace (1:5) and all for his glory (16:27). Paul's letter to the Romans helps us understand how utterly dependant we are on God's grace because we have been so profoundly de-formed by our sin (eg 1:18-32). We learn of God's ultimate plan, that by his grace we are con-formed to the image of his glorious Son (eg 8:28-30). It's a book that teaches us that we are radically trans-formed by God's grace as the Spirit unites us with Christ and renews our minds (eg 12:2). At the core, Romans is all about how God's people are formed by God's grace: formed as individuals saved by grace, formed as churches of diverse people united by God's grace, and formed as the body of Christ that works together to share the message of God's grace with others, that in turn they too may be formed by that same grace in the Lord Jesus.

What a great reason for us to chew slowly and savour the richness of Romans, asking that God might continue his work of forming us by his grace and for his glory.

# COMA questions for the epistles

## Context

- What can you learn about the person or situation to which the letter is written?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- What clues are there about the author and his circumstances?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- What was the main point of the passage immediately before this one? Are there logical or thematic connections to the passage you are reading?

## Observation

- Are there any major sub-sections or breaks in the text? Are there key connecting words (for, therefore, but, because) that indicate the logical flow of the passage?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- What is the main point or points? What supporting points does the author make?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- What surprises are there in the flow of the argument?

## Meaning

- How does this text relate to other parts of the book?
- How does the passage relate to Jesus?
- What does this teach you about God?
- How could you sum up the meaning of this passage in your own words?

## Application

- How does this passage challenge (or confirm) your understanding?
- Is there some attitude you need to change?
- How does this passage call on you to change the way you live?

## QUESTIONS FOR THE EPISTLES



## **Romans 1:1-7, 16:25-27**

**Sermon notes for Sunday April 30**

## **Romans 1:1-7, 16:25-27**

### **Questions for reflection**

What do we learn about Paul and what do we learn about the Romans from this passage?

How is Paul's summary of the gospel different from what we might say?

## **Romans 1:8-17**

**Sermon notes for Sunday May 7**

## **Romans 1:8-17**

### **Questions for reflection**

What do we learn about Paul's relationship with the Christians in Rome?

What do you think Paul means in verse 14 when he says that he is 'obligated'?

## **Romans 1:18-32**

**Sermon notes for Sunday May 14**

## **Romans 1:18-32**

### **Questions for reflection**

How does 1:18 connect back to 1:15-17?

What does this passage teach us is humanity's biggest problem and how is that different from what we might say?

## **Romans 2:1-16**

**Sermon notes for Sunday May 21**

## **Romans 2:1-16**

### **Questions for reflection**

In 1:21-32 the discussion is all about 'them' and what 'they' do. What is the impact of the shift to 'you' in chapter 2?

How does Paul show that we are all alike in facing God's wrath?



## **Romans 2:17-29**

**Sermon notes for Sunday May 28**

## **Romans 2:17-29**

### **Questions for reflection**

What personal evaluation does this passage call for?

What does this passage say about our capacity to keep God's law?

## **Romans 3:1-20**

**Sermon notes for Sunday June 4**

## **Romans 3:1-20**

### **Questions for reflection**

What are the objections that Paul addresses in v1-8 and how does he respond to each of them?

What is the verdict on humanity by v20?

If we can't be saved by the law, then what good is it?

## End Of Section Reflection

*Having come to the end of this first section of Romans, take a moment to reflect on what we've learnt.*

What has God been teaching you?

How has God been challenging your perspective on yourself?

How has God been challenging your perspective on others?

What are some changes that you would like to make in light of what we have learned from Romans? Aim for 1 or 2 that are specific enough that you can put them into action in the next few weeks.

What unanswered questions do you have at this stage?

How have you seen God answering prayer in your group?

Given what we've learned from Romans so far, who is one person you want to pray for an opportunity to share the gospel with? In addition to praying, what is one specific action that you can take towards this goal?

## **Prayer Points**

## Prayer Points



