

SLOW FOOD BIBLE STUDIES: Romans 1-4 (32 studies)

Paul's letter to the Romans has always been seen as the classic exposition of the gospel of Christ. It is not always plain sailing, thanks to Paul's rabbinical style and often highly elliptical method of reasoning. It was written in the later 50s AD to the church at Rome, which contained both Jews and non-Jews, and which Paul was hoping to visit for the first time. Useful commentaries include: John Stott *The Message of Romans* (BST, 1994); F F Bruce *Romans* (Tyndale, 2nd ed 1985); Tom Wright *Paul for Everyone: Romans* (SPCK, 2004); Ian Coffey *Discovering Romans* (Crossway 2000). For a modern preacher and writer trying to confront his religious and not-so-religious contemporaries with the claims of the gospel, one might recommend Timothy Keller (*The Reason for God; The Prodigal God; Counterfeit Gods*).

Introduction. Using any commentary or Bible dictionary to hand, find out as much as you can about how Romans came to be written. Note particularly any points that resonate with your own work/home situation or church scene. Acts 20:1-3; Rom 15:22-32.

1:1-4 How does Jesus Christ fulfil the following passages from the OT: Ps 2:7; Isa 9:6; Jer 23:5; Isa 61:1; Ps 16:10?

1:5-7 'To all in Rome'. What does it mean to be citizens of two kingdoms'? Phil 3:20; Col 1:13-14; 3:1-3.

1:8-10 What can I learn from Paul's prayer life, to improve my own? Eph 6:18-20; Col 4:2; 2 Tim 1:3.

1:11-13 What is Paul's motive for wanting to visit Rome? Even though I'm not an 'apostle', can I learn something from his attitude? Acts 20:24; Rom 15:24, 29, 32; Philem 4-7.

1:14-15 Does the fact that most of the people I meet every day have never really heard or understood the gospel, deter me or inspire me? Mt 9:35-38; Rom 10:1-4; 1 Cor 9:19-23.

1:16-17 This is one of the key statements of Paul. A good exercise would be to rewrite it in one's own words, unpacking its multiple layers of meaning. Why is the gospel God's 'dynamite'? Hab 2:4; Acts 8:4-8; 1 Cor 1:18-25.

1:18-20 Do I accept Paul's argument that the existence of the physical universe requires a power greater than itself to produce it? Or isn't that what he is saying? Ps 8:1-4; Ps 19:1-4; Ps 90:1-4; Rev 4:11. See also Timothy Keller *The Reason for God* ch 8.

1:21-23 How tactful should I be when confronting other people's religious ideas and portrayals of God? Acts 14:11-18; Gal 1:6-10; 1 Pet 3:15-16.

1:24-27 This passage seems to have been branded as unacceptable, not only by society at large but even by sections of the Christian church. Where do I stand in all this? Mk 7:20-23; 1 Thess 4:3-8; 1 Tim 1:3-11; 1 Jn 2:15-17.

1:28-32 Do I privately think that none of this analysis applies to me? Job 42:1-6; Gal 6:7-9; Rev 3:15-18.

2:1-4 If I have ever properly repented, what was my principal motive for doing so? Lk 5:8; Acts 8:22; Jas 4:4-10.

2:5-11 Have I ever seriously considered the possibility that my life might be examined and assessed on the values it has consistently followed in practice? Ps 62:8-12; Mt 25:31-32; 2 Cor 5:10.

2:12-16 Is God unfair if he judges people who have never heard of Christ? Gen 18:25; Job 34:10-15; Acts 10:34-35; Rom 9:14-16; Jas 4:12.

2:17-24 Is my lifestyle consistent with my profession of faith, whether in my official teaching or in everyday socialising? *Mt 23:1-12; Rom 12:1-2; 1 Pet 2:11-12.*

2:25-29 At the heavenly tribunal, am I going to put my trust in badges of membership, or in a life transformed by the Holy Spirit, or what? *Jn 3:3; Jn 8:31-36; Rom 14:17.*

3:1-4 The words in v4 are quoted from Psalm 51:4. How does the case of David illustrate the utter faithfulness and consistency of God? *Dan 4:37; 2 Sam 11-12.*

3:5-8 Is my sin essential to God's plan for his final glory? Am I using this or another such argument for continuing in a path I know to be wrong? *Dt 32:4-6; 1 Thess. 5:22-24; Rev. 15:3-4.*

3:9- 18 Paul would probably have admitted that most of these texts applied, once, to himself. Will I allow the Holy Spirit to apply some of them to my own life? *Jas 3.*

3:19-20 'When we die and are judged, the good in our lives will be weighed against the bad.' Is this what Paul is saying? *Ps 143:2; Acts 13:38-39; Gal 2:15-16.*

3:21-22a How many boxes do I have to tick before God will let me into heaven? *Isa 64:6; Isa 53:6; Jn 1:12, 13.*

3:22b-24 Why is 'grace' so fundamental to the Christian faith? *Gal 2:20-21; Eph 1:3-10; 1 Tim 1:12-17.*

3:25-26 How can God avoid the charge that in forgiving us our sins he is infringing his own principles of perfect justice? *Exod 25:22; Jn 5:22-29; Acts 17:30-31.*

3:27-28 Am I proud of the fact that I've made it with God? Or am I worried that I might not have done? *Ps 103:8-14; Isa 49:14-16; Lk 18:9-14.*

3:29-31 Does the Pauline doctrine of justification by faith mean that we can stop talking about moral standards? *Ps 15; Jn 8:3-11; Rom 8:1-4.*

4:1-3 Look up the original context of Paul's quotation (Gen 15:6). Isn't God in some sense rewarding Abraham for his amazing faith? *Heb 11:8-12; Jas 2:21-24.*

4:4-8 If God has forgiven me just like that, why do I need to confess my sin? *Ps 32:1-5; Prov 28:13; 1 Jn 1:8-10.*

4:9-12 'I've been baptised and confirmed, so I'm a full member of God's people.' True or false? *Mt 22:11-13; Lk 19:9-10; 23:39-43; Rev 14:1-5.*

4:13-15 Am I living out my status as a descendant of Abraham and an 'heir of the world'? *Ps 37:1-11; 1 Cor 3:21b-22; Gal 3:23-29.*

4:16-17 If God can raise the dead, what impossible things could he do in my life today? *John 5:21; Rom 8:10-11; 1 Cor 1:28; Heb 11:19.*

4:18-22 Why didn't Abraham's faith gradually fade as the years went on? What about mine? *Lk 18:1-8; 1 Pet 1:3-9; Rev 2:10.*

4:23-25 What are the implications of the cross and resurrection for my life now? *Rom 6:1-14; 1 Pet 1:18-21.*