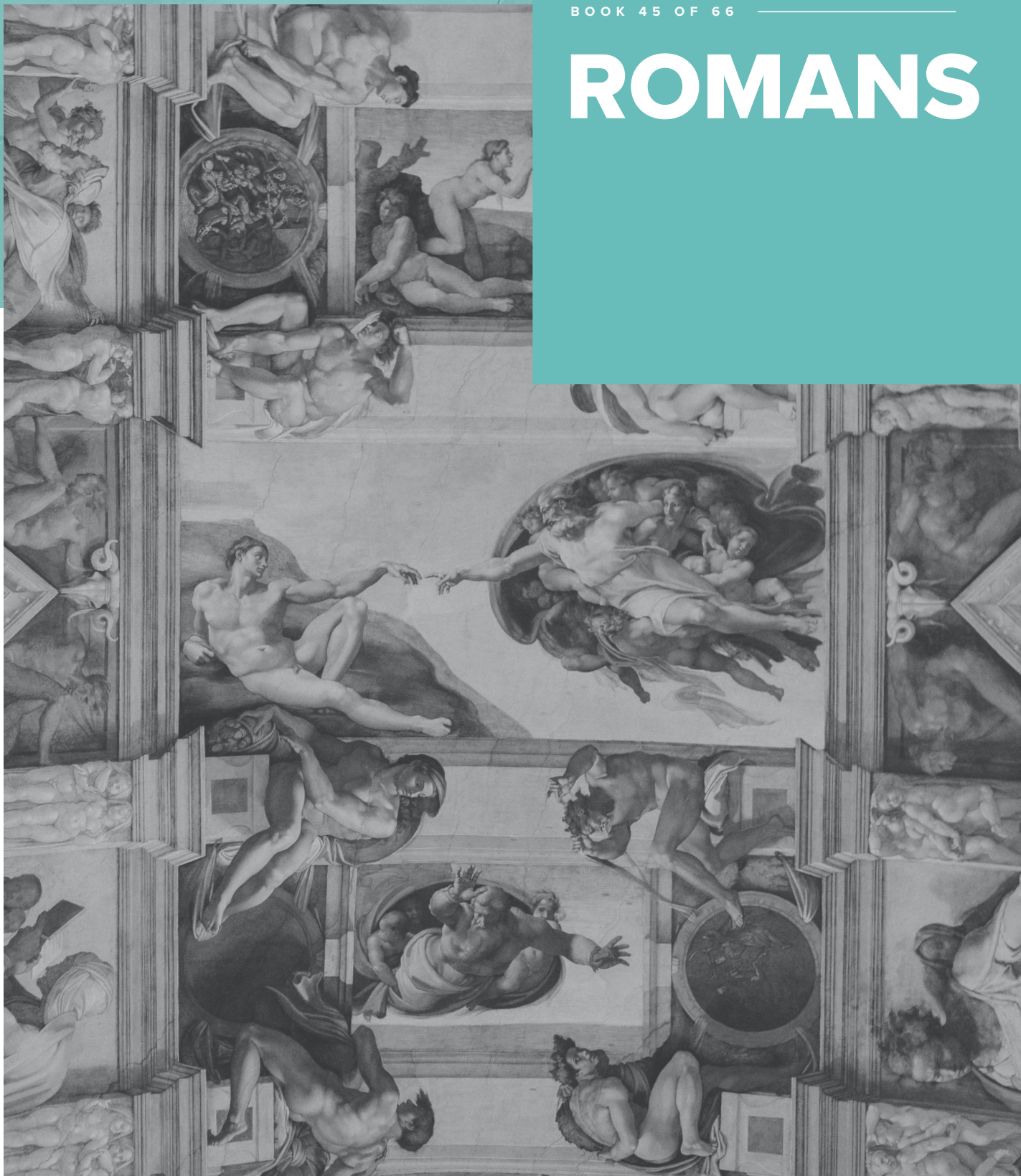




BOOK 45 OF 66

# ROMANS







## WHO IS THE AUTHOR?

The Apostle Paul wrote the Epistle to the Romans. Among scholars, there exists little to no controversy concerning Paul's authorship (as there are with other Pauline epistles).<sup>1</sup> Most scholars accept Pauline authorship because of the author's self-identification in the opening text of the letter; also, this letter's language echoes the language of other Pauline letters, such as Galatians, 1 & 2 Corinthians, and Philippians.<sup>2</sup> Some commentators affirm that Paul made use of an amanuensis or scribe to write the letter as he dictated its contents.<sup>3</sup>

## WHEN AND WHERE DID THE AUTHOR WRITE?

Though some scholars believe Romans was penned sometime in the early 50s, the majority of experts argue for a date around the mid-50s.<sup>4</sup> In fact, some scholars go so far as to date the epistle specifically during the winter of AD 56 or early 57. Paul wrote Romans to the church in Rome from Corinth or an adjacent city named Cenchreae.<sup>5</sup> Paul wrote to the Romans as he was looking to continue his missionary service. At this point, Paul had completed his third missionary journey and was anticipating a trip to Jerusalem and then the West, desiring to go all the way to Spain. Paul wanted to travel to Rome as well, as he had not yet visited there.<sup>6</sup>



## WHO WAS THE ORIGINAL AUDIENCE?

The original audience is identified in the title of this epistle: the believers in Rome. The believers in Rome were not a single, monolithic congregation, but rather a mix of Jews and Roman gentiles. This diversity led to some ethnic and social divisions between the believers.<sup>7</sup> The Jewish synagogues in Rome provided a foundation for Jewish believers in Christ, and after this foundation was laid, gentiles began to join in the already established group. This was not an easy alliance for Jews and gentiles. In fact, it brought about significant tension.<sup>8</sup> Though the Roman church may have begun with a strong Jewish foundation, the gentile believers came to outnumber the Jewish believers. The tension may have escalated still further when the gentiles outnumbered the Jews, after the Jewish expulsion from Rome in the late 40s.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Gerald Bray, ed. *"Romans" in Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture* (Downers Grove, IL: 1998), xvii.

<sup>2</sup> Gary M. Burge, Lynn H. Cohick, and Gene L. Green, *The New Testament in Antiquity* (Grand Rapids, MI: 2009), 322.

<sup>3</sup> F.F. Bruce, *"Romans" in Tyndale Commentary on the New Testament*, ed. Leon Morris (Downers Grove, IL: 2008), 20.

<sup>4</sup> J.D.G. Dunn, *"Romans, Letter to the"* in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, eds. Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, and Daniel G. Reid (Downers Grove, IL: 1993), 838.

<sup>5</sup> N.T. Wright and Michael F. Bird, *The New Testament in its World* (Grand Rapids, MI: 2019), 506.

<sup>6</sup> Burge, Cohick, Green, *New Testament in Antiquity*, 322.

<sup>7</sup> Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: 1993), 411–412.

<sup>8</sup> Dunn, *"Romans, Letter to the"*, 838–839.

<sup>9</sup> Bruce, *"Romans"*, 23.



## WHY DID THE AUTHOR WRITE?

Paul wrote his epistle to the Roman believers for a number of reasons. He was attempting to address some situational issues that were occurring in the Roman church at that time. This was not, as some have suggested, simply an opportunity for Paul to create his magnum opus; rather, it was because he heard from his friends and fellow ministers, Priscilla and Aquila, about specific disputes occurring in the church.<sup>10</sup> Much of what Paul addresses concerned issues relating to the relationship of the Jews and gentiles in the Roman church.<sup>11</sup> Where did the audience live?

The audience of Paul's epistle lived in the city of Rome, which would suggest that the primary culture of these believers was the Roman culture of the day. Rome was technologically advanced for its time, including technologies such as aqueducts, multistoried buildings, and police and fire units. Rome was quite a metropolitan city and was the capital of the Mediterranean world for almost two centuries.<sup>12</sup> Rome was also known as an intellectual and religious center. There was not primarily one school or thought or religion, but rather a diverse collection of ideas and religions, due to the Roman road system that allowed people from all over the Roman empire to come to the capital city.<sup>13</sup> Rome was originally friendly to the Jews but later became hostile under the reigns of Tiberius, Caligula, and, ultimately, the reign of Claudius and his famous eviction notice.<sup>14</sup>







---

<sup>10</sup> Wright and Bird, *New Testament in its World*, 508–509.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Burge, Cohick, and Green, *New Testament in Antiquity*, 322–323.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 322.

<sup>14</sup> Wright and Bird, *New Testament in its World*, 505.







## GENRE

WHAT TYPE OF BOOK IS THIS?  
WHAT ARE SOME KEY FEATURES OF THIS GENRE?

The genre of Romans is an epistle, an ancient letter sent from one party to another as a form of correspondence. New Testament authors used letters to instruct in theology and how to live according to the gospel.<sup>15</sup> Ancient epistles included an introduction, body, and conclusion. New Testament authors, and Paul particularly, used this literary genre with some stylistic discretion. Paul often made use of some epistolary features, such as quoting the Old Testament, a greeting, a prayer, creeds and hymns, domestic codes, slogans, and lists of vices and virtues.<sup>16</sup>

## THEMATIC LANGUAGE

WHAT WORDS DOES THE AUTHOR REGULARLY USE IN THIS BOOK?

- Law (78 times)<sup>17</sup>
- Righteousness (66 times)
- Sin (60 times)
- In Christ (33 times)
- Justification (17 times)

---

<sup>15</sup> Andreas J. Köstenberger and Richard D. Patterson, *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids, MI: 2011), 454.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, 469–476.

<sup>17</sup> Herman Puchi, *Romans: Inductive Bible Study* [2020], [inductive.indubiblia.org](http://inductive.indubiblia.org)

## KEY VERSES

WHAT ARE SOME KEY VERSES IN THIS LETTER?

**1:16–17 (ESV):** For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, “The righteous shall live by faith.”

**5:1 (ESV):** Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

**8:1 (ESV):** There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

**2:1–2 (ESV):** I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version® (ESV®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

## ILLUSTRATION

### WHAT'S AN ILLUSTRATION THAT WILL HELP READERS UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT AND MESSAGE OF THE BOOK?

Imagine a church living in a world divided by race. At their breaking point, the elders of the church reach out to a trusted Christian minister for help. The friend responds by sending a video to the church. In the clip, he introduces himself, his core theological beliefs, and expresses a desire to visit them. The minister also offers wisdom to address the division in this church according to what he believes the gospel message says. This is what the Apostle Paul did for the Roman church—though, not owning a smartphone, he did it in letter format.

## OVERVIEW

### A SUCCINCT OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK TO INTRODUCE ROMANS TO READERS.

The Apostle Paul, while enjoying some respite after his third missionary expedition, wrote to the Roman church because he'd heard the Jewish and gentile Christians were not getting along. This letter expressed his intent to visit them later, and it was also an introduction to his ministry. Paul communicates his understanding of the gospel to the church and instructs them in how to live. Paul knew one important truth: knowing and applying the gospel would be a balm to the wounds within this congregation. In that same way, these words from Paul are not just for an ancient society—they are applicable to today's society, too. Knowing the gospel story and applying it to our lives, we change the way we interact with the world around us.