

WHY DID PAUL WRITE ROMANS?

PURPOSES OF ROMANS:

- 1. To be a “letter of introduction” before Paul visited Rome.**
 - *While in Rome, he planned to strengthen the church there and proclaim the gospel, obtaining a harvest of souls (1:11-15), then enlist Rome as a sponsor of his ministry in Spain and the western half of the empire (15:24).*
 - *In order to achieve these objectives, Paul had to “explain his theology in such a way as to get the Romans to commend him to others and to realize that he was completely orthodox” (Osborne, 19).*
- 2. To raise prayer support for Paul as he went to Jerusalem.**
 - *For protection from Jewish enemies (15:30-31).*
 - *For the churches in Judea to accept the gift the Gentile churches were sending, in order to forge unity world-wide between Jewish and Gentile Christians (15:25-27, 30-31).*
- 3. To bring unity between Jews and Gentiles in the church in Rome.**
 - *There was conflict between law-observant Jewish Christians ('the weak') and law-free Gentiles ('the strong') (14:1—15:13).*
 - *The rest of the book also encourages Jew-Gentile unity, showing unity is based in the gospel of Jesus Christ:*
 - ✓ *Jews and Gentiles are equally sinful (1:18—3:20).*
 - ✓ *Jews and Gentiles are both made righteous by faith in Jesus (3:21—8:39).*
 - ✓ *Jews were reminded that God had grafted the Gentiles into the “olive tree”; Gentiles were reminded that God planned to bring Israel back to Him (9:1—11:36).*
 - ✓ *All were instructed to live humbly as “one body in Christ” (12:5), through love fulfilling the law (12:1—13:14).*
- 4. To remind Roman Christians of what they already knew about the gospel and the importance of obeying it.**
 - *“You... are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able also to admonish one another. But I have written very boldly to you on some points so as to remind you again... ministering as a priest the gospel of God, so that my offering of the Gentiles may become acceptable” (15:14-16).*
- 5. Possibly: To summarize the gospel for all churches.**
 - *“Paul summarizes his doctrine of salvation in a deeper way than in any other epistle,” and;*
 - *“Most of the book does not address the Roman Christians as directly as his other epistles address their audiences” (Osborne, 21).*

– Based in part on Grant R. Osborne, *Romans*, from *The IVP New Testament Commentary Series*, ed. Grant R. Osborne, D. Stuart Briscoe, and Haddon Robinson. Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2004, 18-20.

THEMES OF ROMANS:

- 1. Peace between God and man: God's justification of sinners by grace through faith in Christ alone, for all who believe.**
 - *Linked to this theme are the themes of (a) God's own righteousness and faithfulness as a covenant-making and keeping God, and (b) the necessity and ability of believers to fulfill the requirement of the law by the power of the Spirit.*
- 2. Peace between Jews and Gentiles: The unity of all believers in Christ, as the true children of Abraham.**
 - *This theme springs from the first, for “there is no difference” now between Jew and Gentile either regarding sin and guilt or regarding how we are saved through Christ. Believers are called to live out this reality by welcoming each other as each has been welcomed by Christ.*

– Based in part on John R.W. Stott, *The Message of Romans*. Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press, 1994, 35-36.