

Romans Introduction and Chapter 1a - John Karmelich

Title: Why Rome and Why Should I Care?

Let me begin with my title: "Why Rome and why should I care?" First know when the Roman Empire peaked, that was when Paul was going from place to place setting up churches. At that time, just about every point of land that touched the Mediterranean Sea was part of that Empire. When I was young my parents and siblings drove across southern Europe. My father was amazed by all the Roman aqueducts that stood for millennia all over the continent. My simple point is that empire was a big deal. Consider that Christian churches existed all over that empire and then spread around the world all due to the rise of Christianity. That's why I consider Paul to be the most important person (outside of Jesus) to live in western civilization. He started most of the original churches outside of Jerusalem and that became the main religion in that area since then. When you consider that Israel was a "blip" on that empire and the fact that Jesus was a relatively unknown martyr there, it's amazing to consider how much Christianity's growth dominated that empire for centuries and spread beyond it.

Which leads me to this book: Paul, the man who started churches all over Turkey and Greece (as they are known today) had never been to the Roman capital. In his travels, he met lots of people of Roman culture and were from that city. Paul wrote this book shortly before he traveled to Jerusalem, where he was arrested on a false charge of starting a riot! Bottom line is, after being in prison there for over two years, he got to see Rome as a prisoner. That trip involved shipwrecks, and other life endangerment, as Paul had to deal a lot with those types of problems over the last 20 years of his life. There was a church in Rome when this letter to the Romans was written. Some years earlier, all Jewish Rome residents had to leave for refusing to worship the emperor, plus fighting between pro and anti-Jesus' factions. By the time Paul wrote this letter, Christian (home) churches existed with a mixture of Jewish and non-Jewish believers in Jesus as God!

To answer my opening theme bluntly, Paul wanted to write to Rome because it was the center of what was the largest empire the world had ever seen. The city had lots of famous structures plus slums as it had a large slave population as well. Because Paul had never been there, this letter gives details on the role of the Christian. The letter is often called, "The Gospel According to Paul". Realize Paul was not one of the original 12 disciples. You can consider him an apostle in that the resurrected Jesus did give him a personal visit that led to his conversion. Paul went from a very well-educated religious Jew who persecuted the church to one who founded more churches than any person ever. He was a legal citizen of Rome so he could freely travel around the empire. Because of his education and desire to spread the gospel, in effect he was the ideal person to spread Christianity all over the empire and that spread to all continents (except Antarctica of course). Paul was probably about the same age as Jesus, but he did not come on the scene till church growth began in Israel soon after the resurrection.

That leads me to the second part of my title, "why should I care?" As I state a lot, I write these lessons for people who already believe Jesus is God and ponder "now what do I do?" If I had to describe what is the key phrase in this book, it's Verse 17 of Chapter 1. Paul quotes the minor prophet Habakkuk! In that Old Testament book, Habakkuk made a statement that changed Paul's life just as it changed Martin Luther's life roughly 1,000 years later! It's usually translated, "The just shall live by faith". That verse is quoted three times in the New Testament. It is used in Galatians where Paul focuses on how we shall live as a Christian. It is quoted in Hebrews, a book that focuses on what is faith! In Romans, the focus is on who is "justified" to be saved. I'm well aware most of us believe we're saved. My question is we

are saved to do what? It's a big issue in this book. Just saying a study of Romans will ALWAYS have a positive effect on our lives! That's why I'm taking it on again!

Before I get into the first part of Chapter 1, let me give the "who, what, when and where" once again as to make it clear: Nobody seriously argues Paul didn't write it himself. Most likely he wrote it from the time he was in Corinth right before he traveled to Jerusalem (end of his 3rd missionary journey) as that was when he got arrested after that journey. Of the 26 New Testament books, Paul wrote 13 of them. I believe he wrote Hebrews as well, but that's another debate. It's his only book written to a church Paul did not start or visit personally! That's why it's the most complete in doctrine! It explains Christianity better than any single bible book! Even if you have been a Christian a long time, studying Romans is a great way to grasp doctrines we haven't fully developed in our minds and remind ourselves exactly the God we've committed our life to worshipping and why it's worth it!

With that said time to take on the first 17 verses. The topic changes after that! If you didn't know, Paul loves run-on sentences. I figure he's so excited over what he's saying he doesn't stop to catch his breath as he writes. From Verses 1-6, Paul explains who he is and why he's writing. Verse 7 states the letter is to the church in Rome. Don't know if it's a house church or a larger group, but it is what it is! Then the letter focuses on his desire to visit them. It states he prays for people he knows in that church (those he knew from his travels) and Paul longs to go there to be a part of that church. What Paul "gets off on" is not just to make new converts and leave. He desires to be part of believer's lives and watch them grow in their faith and share in the joy of trusting God as He will guide the lives of believers for His glory!

Some of the teachers who influenced my life have written volumes on these verses, so summarizing it here is a challenge! I am fascinated Paul is writing to an entity that is mostly non-Jewish, yet he freely and often quotes the Old Testament assuming it's read there! Paul states he's an apostle. Not necessary one of the 12, but someone Jesus called to preach the Gospel (the good news that we are saved by faith alone, to do good works based solely on gratitude and not to earn His love). He mentions the trinity in the opening chapter and emphasizes that Jesus was raised from the dead, as proof all of that is real, and those who are saved no matter what's our background, sex, religion, age, etc. are well saved! He argues we start to live differently once we realize God's chosen us to be a witness for Him. We don't earn it as He chose us before the world began! Once we've realized that, we live our lives differently! Again, it's not to earn His love but it's to show gratitude for what He's already done for us!

When Paul mentions the Roman church (yes, the book is meant to be read by any and all believers) but it was first written to that church. The first thing Paul offers is God's grace. That refers to fact we were chosen by God and must accept it. Once we realize that then we can have peace in our lives in spite of anything we're dealing with at the moment. In Verse 8 it talks about Roman's church being reported as good all over the world. I suspect it had to do with the Roman Empire kicking out Jewish people some years back (possibly over Christian division) and some years later, the church is thriving in spite of that occurring. Then Paul takes about how he cares for and prays for that church. I have to admit I've been jealous of that type of prayer life! My prayer list isn't nearly as long as Paul's and God blesses anyone who is willing to commit their lives to devout prayer for other believers.

One may wonder, what does Paul get out of wanting to see them face to face? Keep in mind he's never been there when he wrote it! Remember he's writing to believers so it's not about conversion! What he loved was getting to know people. God gives all believers gifts, and he wants to experience their use of their gifts on him. For example, some have the gift of encouragement! Some have a special gift to give or use their time to help others! Yes, I know non-believers can have these gifts as well, but using those gifts in the church is what Paul was interested in! Paul says he cares about all people not just those of a

Jewish background. (He knew the church was mixed, so he wanted to state that!) The section ends with the reminder that the Gospel was revealed in the Old Testament but it's for anyone willing to accept the Gospel truth of salvation by faith alone. I realize this is old news for many of us. What I hope all of us realize as we study this is the reminder to reach out to other believers so we can share in their faith just as they can share in ours. That's Paul's desire in writing this and that's the key message here!

With that said, hope you like this study. I wrote a more detailed one some years back. If you want to read that, click on one of the links below. It is still a joy to study this stuff and again I'm grateful for you reading this. If you're new here, you're always welcome to e-mail me. Thanks again for reading!

You can read the EXACT SAME FILE by either clicking on

Option #1:

biblestudyemail.com/karmelich_romans/romans_intro_and_01.htm

OR

Option #2 Reading the same file in Adobe Acrobat (pdf) Format:

biblestudyemail.com/karmelich_romans/romans_intro_and_01.pdf

Personally, I prefer reading options #2. It is easiest on the eyes.

That's it. Hope you enjoy it. Don't forget to fire up a prayer prior to your reading.