

The event that split history into “before” and “after” and changed the world took place about thirty years before Paul wrote this letter. The event - the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus - took place in a remote corner of the extensive Roman Empire. The province of Judea in Palestine. Hardly anyone noticed, certainly no one in busy and powerful Rome.

And when this letter arrived in Rome, hardly anyone read it, certainly no one of influence. There was much to read in Rome - imperial decrees, exquisite poetry, finely crafted moral philosophy - and much of it was world-class. And yet in no time, as such things go, this letter left all those other writings in the dust. Paul's letter to the Romans has had a far larger impact on its readers than the volumes of all the Roman writers put together.

The quick rise of this letter to a peak of influence is extraordinary, written as it was by an obscure Roman citizen without connections. But when we read it for ourselves, we begin to realize that it is the letter itself that is truly extraordinary, and that no obscurity in writer or readers could have kept it obscure for long.

The letter to the Romans is a piece of exuberant and passionate thinking. This is the glorious life of the mind enlisted in the service of God. Paul takes the well-witnessed and devoutly believed fact of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth and thinks through its implications. How does it happen that in the death and resurrection of Jesus, world history took a new direction, and at the same moment the life of every man, woman, and child on the planet was eternally affected? What is God up to? What does it mean that Jesus “saves”? What's behind all this, and where is it going?

These are the questions that drive Paul's thinking. Paul's mind is supple and capacious. He takes logic and argument, poetry and imagination, Scripture and prayer, creation and history and experience, and weaves them into this letter that has become the premier document of Christian theology.

#### **Commentary on Romans from The Bible Project:**

- <https://thebibleproject.com/videos/romans-1-4/>
- <https://thebibleproject.com/videos/romans-5-16/>

#### **Commentary on themes in Romans from The Bible Project:**

- Holiness: <https://thebibleproject.com/videos/holiness/>
- The Law: <https://thebibleproject.com/videos/law/>
- Sacrifice and Atonement: <https://thebibleproject.com/videos/sacrifice-and-atonement/>
- Covenants: <https://thebibleproject.com/videos/covenants/>

#### **Overview of Romans from [bible.org](https://bible.org):**

- <https://bible.org/seriespage/56-romans>

#### **Commentary on Romans 13-14 from [bible.org](https://bible.org):**

- <https://bible.org/seriespage/33-christian-and-civil-government-romans-131-7>
- <https://bible.org/seriespage/34-love-law-and-last-days-romans-138-14>
- <https://bible.org/seriespage/35-love-and-liberty-liberties-love-won%E2%80%99t-take-romans-141-23>

## **READ Romans 13-14**

(The following discussion questions are adapted from The Serendipity Bible)

### *Opening*

- In general, do you easily respect and fall in line with the authority figures in your life or are you skeptical, questioning authority?
- When was the last time you got a traffic ticket? How did you feel about the police officer?
- What was the occasion of your first debt or loan?
- What, if any, rules did your family have for what you could or could not do on Sunday?
- What did you, or do you, refuse to eat and drink?

### *Digging in — Discovering the Word*

- Why does Paul say we should submit to governing authorities? Compare this passage with Acts 5:27-32. What's the difference between submitting to authorities and unconditionally obeying them?
- Who are the current authorities in your life? How well do you relate to them? How could you do better?
- How does Paul's concept of love differ from today's popular notions of love?
- How does love fulfill all of the other commandments?
- How does Paul's urgency in verse 11 influence your perspective on life?
- How do you obtain the "clothing" in verse 14? How would you use this section to explain holiness?
- What "dispute matters" divide the church today?
- When it comes to "gray areas," how do you react to those with stricter convictions than you? Those with more lenient convictions than you?
- Regarding these gray areas, do you need to hear: A) Paul's challenge not to look down on those who have strict convictions; or B) his challenge not to condemn those with more lenient convictions?
- How can both sides stop judging one another and start accepting each other? Why is this difficult?
- What should be our main guideline in determining what we do or say in the presence of fellow Christians?
- In what way does knowing you will give an account before God (14:12) affect how you relate to others?
- What active step can you take to build up others in your church?

### *Connecting the Dots — Applying the Word*

- If God has established every governing authority, how should a Christian in America think, speak and act about political parties and governments that work differently and have different values than our own?
- How was your walk with the Lord this past week? Did you feel more submitted or rebellious in that relationship?
- How would your life be different if you consciously tried to "wear" Jesus Christ?
- When has your freedom been a stumbling block to someone else? What happened?
- As time has passed, how has your sensitivity to the consciences of other Christians changed? Where do you draw the line on trying to please everyone?
- Romans 15:7 states, "Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God." What individual or types of people do you have difficulty accepting? Can you commit that to the Lord?