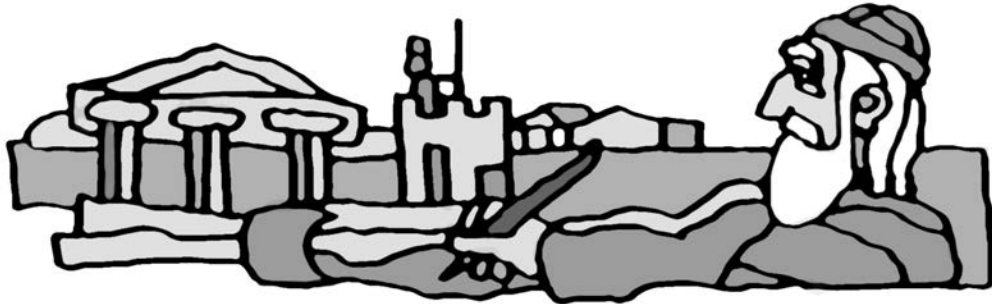


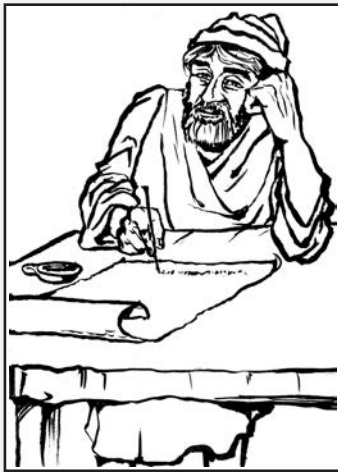
# Paul in Rome



## SABBATH—SEPTEMBER 30

**READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON:** Romans 15:20–27; Acts 28:17–31; Philippians 1:12; Romans 1:7.

**MEMORY VERSE:** “First, I thank my God through [by] Jesus Christ for all of you. People all over the world [earth] are talking about your faith” (Romans 1:8, NIV).



Paul answered the question, “How is a person saved?”

**IT IS IMPORTANT** for us as we study Romans to understand the things happening in history at the time Paul wrote his letter. So, we should ask, What problems did the church face? And what was happening in the government of the Roman Empire [Kingdom]? Answers to these questions are important. They help us understand the Bible better. So, let us begin by searching for answers from Romans itself about the things that were happening in Paul's day. In chapter 1, we discover that Paul wrote to the Roman Christians at a special time and for a very clear reason. When we learn this reason, we will understand the book of Romans better.

What if you had been a member of the church at Rome during the 1st century? How wonderful it would have been to read Paul's letter to the church after he first wrote it! Let us study Romans with the same careful attention that a member of the church at Rome would have given to Paul's words. After all, the Holy Spirit gave Paul his message.

Many hundreds of years have passed since Paul wrote Romans to answer the question, *How is a person saved?* So, we might ask, What meaning do Paul's words have for us today? Plenty, as we shall see. Just as Paul's words had meaning for Martin Luther hundreds of years after Paul first wrote them.

## PAUL'S LETTER (Acts 18:23)

*What city was a New Testament writer living in when he wrote his letter?* This question is important. It helps us to find out when a letter of the Bible was written. Paul traveled a lot. So, knowing where he was at a certain time gives us a hint about the date when his letter was written.

Romans 16:1, 2 shows that Paul might have written his letter in the city of Cenchreae (Ken-kree-EYE). Cenchreae was a Greek city near Corinth. But Paul also talks about a woman named Phoebe. Phoebe lived in Corinth. So, Paul's mention of Phoebe in Romans 16:1 might make Corinth the place where Paul wrote Romans.

Paul started the church at Corinth on his second trip to spread the Good News about Jesus. This trip lasted from A.D. 49–52 (read Acts 18:1–18). Paul made a third trip from A.D. 53–58. He visited Greece again at that time (Acts 20:2, 3). He collected money for poor believers in Jerusalem near the end of that trip (Romans 15:25, 26). So, Paul could have written the book of Romans in the early months of A.D. 58.

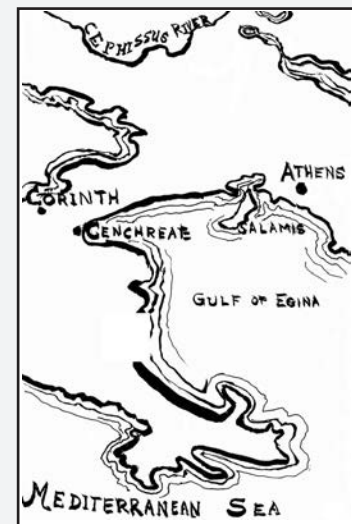
**As shown in Acts 18:23, what other churches did Paul visit on his third trip to spread the Good News?**

Paul visited the Galatian churches on his third trip to spread the Good News. There, he learned that false teachers tricked the Galatians into believing lies. Paul was afraid these false teachers also might go to Rome and spread their lies there. So, Paul wrote a letter to the Romans to stop the same thing from happening in Rome.

“Paul writes out the important truths about the Good News in his letter to the Romans. He talks about the hopes and promises that once belonged to the Jews. But now those blessings were offered to the Gentiles [Gentiles are non-Jews].” —Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles [Leaders and Teachers]*, page 373, adapted.

Remember, it is important when we study any book of the Bible to know why it was written. So, it is important for us in our study of Romans to know about the problems that were causing trouble in the Jewish and Gentile churches. In next week's lesson, we will look at those problems.

**What problems are causing trouble in your church right now? What are you doing to help solve them?**



It is helpful for us to know where Paul was living when he wrote his letter. Then we can find out when the letter was written.

**PAUL'S WISH TO VISIT ROME (Romans 15:20–27)**

It is true that the best way to communicate most of the time is in person. We can phone, e-mail, text, or even Skype. But face-to-face and person-to-person is the best way to communicate. That is why Paul announced in his letter to the Romans that he wanted to see them in person. He wanted them to know he was coming, and why.

**What reasons does Paul give in Romans 15:20–27 for not visiting Rome earlier? What made Paul decide to come to Rome when he did? How important to Paul was serving God? And how important was serving God to Paul's reasons for visiting Rome? What can we learn from Paul about serving God and sharing the Good News with other people? What important truth does Paul share in Romans 15:27 about Jews and non-Jews?**

God chose Paul to be His missionary. A missionary is someone who takes the Good News about Jesus to new places. Paul was God's missionary to the Gentiles. Gentiles were non-Jews. Paul felt a strong desire to take the Good News to new places. Paul let other people preach the Good News in places where the message already had been preached. In those days, Christianity was still a new religion. There were very few missionaries and teachers to help preach the truth. So, it would have been a waste of time for Paul to work in places where the Good News already had been preached. Paul said, "I have always wanted to preach the good news where Christ was not known. I [do not] want to build on what someone else has started" (Romans 15:20, NIRV). Paul's plan was to take the message to places where it had not gone before so that "those who were not told about him [Jesus] will understand" (Romans 15:21, NIRV).

Paul did not plan to stay in Rome for long. Instead, Paul wanted to take the message to Spain. Paul hoped to get the Christians in Rome to support his trip there.

**Paul asked the church for help to take God's message to a new place. What important lesson can we learn from this fact?**

**Read Romans 15:20–27 again. Notice in these verses how much Paul wanted to work for God and to serve people. Why do you work for God? How much is your heart filled with a desire to serve other people?**



**Paul's plan was to spread the Good News to places it had not gone before. Then more people could learn the Good News about Jesus.**

## PAUL IN ROME (Acts 28:17–31)

**“When we got to Rome, Paul was allowed to live by himself. But a soldier guarded him” (Acts 28:16, NIV). What happened to Paul when he finally came to Rome? Often things happen to us that we do not want or expect. What does this verse teach us about what we should do when bad things happen to us without any warning?**

Paul finally arrived in Rome. But he arrived as a prisoner. Paul’s arrival under guard teaches us that even our best plans do not always turn out as we might want or hope for.

But before he was made a prisoner, Paul reached Jerusalem at the end of his third trip to spread the Good News to new places. Paul arrived in Rome with money he collected for the poor. Paul collected this money from the churches in Europe and Asia Minor. But something happened to Paul that he did not expect. He was arrested. Then he was held prisoner for two years in Caesarea. Paul asked that his case be taken before Caesar himself. Three years passed after Paul’s arrest. Then Paul arrived in Rome. But Paul’s arrival was not at all how he first planned when he first wrote to the Roman Church about visiting them.

**What does Acts 28:17–31 tell us about Paul’s time in Rome? What lesson can we learn from these verses?**

“It was not Paul’s preaching that got the attention of the people who worked for, and lived in, the palace of Caesar. Instead, it was Paul’s chains. Paul broke free many people from the chains that held them in slavery to sin. Paul did this work when he was a prisoner himself. But he did more than free people from sin. Paul announced, ‘And because I am a prisoner, most of the believers have become bolder [stronger] in the Lord. They now dare even more to preach the good news without fear.’ Philippians 1:14 [NIV].”—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles [Leaders]*, page 464, adapted.

**How often have you experienced something you did not expect or want to happen? Let us hope everything turned out for good in the end (read Philippians 1:12). So, how does your faith grow stronger from such an experience? How can hard times teach you to trust God more in the difficult times ahead?**



**“It was not Paul’s preaching that captured the attention of the people who worked for and lived in the palace of Caesar. While he was a prisoner himself, Paul broke free many people from the chains that held them in the slavery of sin.”**

## THE HOLY ONES IN ROME (Romans 1:7)

**Paul says to the church in Rome: “You are loved by God and appointed [chosen] to be his holy people” (Romans 1:7, NIV). What does this verse teach us about truth, faith, and God?**

**“Loved by God” (NIV).** It is true that God loves everyone. But God loves in a special way the people who choose to serve Him. These people have accepted God’s love. We find this same law of love rules in life around us. We love in a special way the people who love us. There is the same love shown between us and the people who love us back. Love needs to be shown love. Our love must get an answer of love for the love we give. But what if our love does not get any love for the love we give? Then our love might be limited in how it shows itself to the people we love.

**“Appointed [chosen] to be [God’s] holy people” (NIV).** The wording “holy people” comes from the Greek word *hagioi*. *Hagioi* means “holy ones” or “saints.” “Holy” means “chosen for a special purpose.” So, a holy person, or a saint, is one whom God has “chosen.” This person might be far from perfect and have a lot of spiritual growing to do. But this person has chosen Jesus to be the Lord of his or her life. This choice is what the Bible means by a “holy person,” or “saint.”



**Love must receive an answer of love for the love it gives.**

**Paul says that the Christians in Rome were “appointed [chosen]” by God” (Romans 1:7, NIV). Does Paul mean that God does not choose some people? How does Ephesians 1:4 help us understand Paul’s meaning?**

The great news is that Jesus died for everyone. So, God chose everyone “to be his holy people” (Romans 1:7, NIV) before the earth was made. God’s plan was for all people to be saved. The final fire of hell was meant only for the devil and his angels (Matthew 25:41). Some people will not accept God’s gift. But their refusing God’s offer does not make His gift less special.

**God chose to save you. What a special gift! So, why let anything hold you back from accepting that gift?**



## THE BELIEVERS IN ROME (Romans 1:8)

No one knows exactly how the church in Rome was started. Stories handed down from the early days of the church say that Peter or Paul started the church. But there is no proof that these stories are true. Maybe the church was started by people who accepted the message preached in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2). Pentecost was the time when Jesus gave His followers the special blessing He promised them from the Holy Spirit. Or maybe, after that time, some people accepted Jesus and moved to Rome. There in Rome, these Christians could have witnessed about their faith and started the church.

Thirty years or more passed after Pentecost. But the church in Rome was not visited during that time by any of the apostles. Apostles were chosen by Jesus to be leaders in the church. What is amazing is that so many people knew about the church in Rome before any leader went there.

The word “faith” in Romans 1:8 can include the idea of loyalty to God. So, Paul is saying that the church members at Rome were loyal to the new way of life they found in Jesus.

**Read Romans 15:14. As shown to us in this verse, how does Paul describe the church in Rome?**

Here are three things Paul praises about the spiritual experience of the Roman Christians:

1. The Roman Christians were “full of goodness” (Romans 15:14, NIV). Can people say the same thing about us?

2. The Roman Christians were “filled with knowledge” (Romans 15:14, NIV). Again and again, the Bible says wisdom, understanding, and knowledge are important. Christians are told to study their Bibles to be wise. “In Ezekiel 36:26, God tells His people, ‘I will give you new hearts’ [NIV]. What does God mean by these words? God means, ‘I will give you new minds.’ A change of heart always comes with a clear understanding of Christian duty and truth.”—Ellen G. White, *My Life Today*, page 24, adapted.

3. The Roman Christians were “able to teach one another” (Romans 15:14, NIV). This verse hints at the truth that we should not separate ourselves from other believers. We will fail to grow in our spiritual lives if we do. So, we need to encourage other believers. And we need other believers to encourage us.



**Christians should study their Bibles to be wise and to have understanding.**

**ADDITIONAL THOUGHT:** “God’s desire to save us did not come from a careless plan He threw together at the last minute after we sinned. No. God made a careful plan to save us before He ever made our earth (1 Corinthians 2:7; Ephesians 1:3, 13). God’s plan to save humans comes from His everlasting love for us (Jeremiah 31:3).

“God’s plan to save us covers the past, the present, and the future. What does this plan include? (1) This plan includes the blessings of being chosen to be God’s holy people and the blessings of our being made new by faith in Jesus. (2) God’s plan includes our being saved and forgiven. (3) God’s plan includes the truth that all things are one in Jesus. (4) God’s plan includes the sealing. The sealing is the special work that the Holy Spirit does to make God’s people holy and to get them ready to live with God in heaven. (5) God’s plan to save us also includes the reward of everlasting life that God gives to us at the Second Coming. And (6) God’s plan includes the gift of new bodies and spirits that will never die. At the center of this plan is the suffering and death of Jesus. Jesus’ death was not an accident of history. And Jesus’ death did not happen because we chose for God to die. Instead, Jesus’ death was a part of God’s plan to save us (Acts 4:27, 28). Jesus was, in truth, ‘the Lamb . . . whose death was planned before the earth was created [made]’ [Revelation 13:8, NIRV].”—*The Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology [Study of God]* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald® Publishing Association, 2000), pages 275, 276, adapted.



God’s plan to save humans comes from His everlasting love for us.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① How would life be different without the Protestant Reformation? The Protestant Reformation was a time when people began to “wake up” to Bible truths. The Reformation began in the 1500s. Its purpose was to change the Roman Catholic Church for the better. Later, that change led to the start of the Protestant churches.
- ② God chose us to be saved before He ever made the earth (read also Titus 1:1, 2; 2 Timothy 1:8, 9). Why should we find this truth encouraging? What does this truth tell us about God’s love for all people? Why is it sad when people turn away from the gift that God freely offers them?
- ③ What can your class do to help improve how others think of your church?