

Unlocking the Book of Romans

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Introduction:

“Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures, the gospel concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and was declared to be Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness by resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for the sake of his name, including yourselves who are called to belong to Jesus Christ” (Rom. 1:1-6). This passage accurately sums up this course – theology is all about Jesus. It’s about Jesus in his flesh, his power, and his resurrection. It’s about spreading the message of the Gospel and participating in the growth of Christ’s Kingdom. This class will serve as an introduction to Paul’s *magnum opus* (Romans), which informs us about the nature of the Kingdom, and the realities of being part of that Kingdom.

Learning Objectives:

- Strengthen *your* faith in Jesus. One of my primary objectives is that you leave with a passion for the biblical Jesus that can inform your ministry.
- Provide tools to see Romans not as dry theology but as engaging historical/theological-literature so that this engagement will find itself in the pulpit and the hearts of God’s people.
- Understand the history of interpretation in Romans and how past thoughts influence present conclusions.
- Demonstrate engagement with Romans in a constructive way that deals seriously with God’s Word but always has an eye on the present.
- Understand Romans in its Jewish and Roman contexts. These two socio-historical worlds inform Paul; therefore, we must see them couched within those contexts in order to experience the world-changing impact they had on the 1st Century.
- Be able to articulate modern scholarly controversies in Romans in a fair, clear, and concise fashion.

Approach:

- This class will be a mix of close readings and guided discussions. During our Zoom meetings, the instructor will be guiding you through the leading questions for the week in order to open up a space of collective inquiry. It will be expected that each student completes the required readings prior to the Zoom meeting to allow for the most fruitful use of our time together.
- Classes will meet via Zoom for two hours each week and will be recorded for later viewing by students who cannot participate. Additional student participation and instructor interaction can take place on a private discussion board.

Grade Breakdown & Assignment Due Dates:

- Final Exam (Online, Open Notes): 30%
- Final Paper (8-10 Pages): 40%
- Weekly “Top Five” Reading Analyses: 20%
- Weekly Discussion Board Posting and Interaction: 10%

Required Reading:

Purchase These Books:

- Students will read through the *Romans* throughout the class. In the final week of class the student will be expected to read the entirety of *Romans* again in one sitting.
- *Romans in Full Circle: A History of Interpretation*, Mark Reasoner. WJK, 2005 - \$22.05
- *Justification Reconsidered: Rethinking a Pauline Theme*, Stephen Westerholm. Eerdmans, 2013 - \$12.94
- *Introducing Romans: Critical Issues in Paul's Most Famous Letter*. Richard N. Longnecker. Eerdmans, 2011 - \$39.10

The Following *Required Readings* do not need to be purchased; I will provide scanned copies through Google Classroom:

- Stendahl, Krister, Bp. 1963. "The apostle Paul and the introspective conscience of the west." *Harvard Theological Review* 56, no. 3: 199-215.
- *The Romans Debate* (Rev. Ed.). Kurt P. Donfried, ed. Baker Academic, 1991 (Ch. 18)
- *Where is Boasting: Early Jewish Soteriology and Paul's Response in Romans 1-5*, Simon Gathercole. Eerdmans, 2002 (Pages 216-248)

Course Outline (Subject to change before Course Start Date):

Week	Dates	Discussion Topics	Reading
1	Week of 4/5	Introduction to Romans	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Introducing Romans</i>, pp. 3-53• <i>Romans in Full Circle</i>, Locus 1
2	Week of 4/12	Ancient and Modern Controversies	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Introducing Romans</i>, pp. 55-90• <i>Romans in Full Circle</i>, Locus 2
3	Week of 4/19	Reading a Really Old Letter: How to Do It	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Introducing Romans</i>, pp. 169-234• <i>Romans in Full Circle</i>, Locus 3
4	Week of 4/26	What's the deal with all of these perspectives?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Justification Reconsidered</i>, all• "The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West"
5	Week of 5/3	Reading <i>pistis Christou</i> and <i>dikaiosune Theou</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Introducing Romans</i>, pp. 290-322• <i>Romans in Full Circle</i>, Locus 4
6	Week of 5/10	The Rhetorical Structure of Romans pt. 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Introducing Romans</i>, pp. 353-76• <i>Romans in Full Circle</i>, Locus 5
7	Week of 5/17	The Rhetorical Structure of Romans pt. 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Introducing Romans</i>, pp. 378-442• <i>Romans in Full Circle</i>, Locus 6
8	Week of 5/24	The Rhetorical Structure of Romans pt. 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Introducing Romans</i>, pp. 378-465• <i>Romans in Full Circle</i>, Locus 7

9	Week of 5/31	Why the reader matters – or, who’s getting the letter?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Where is Boasting</i>, pp. 216-248
10	Week of 5/7	Putting it all together: The Theology of Romans in Covenantal Context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Romans Debate</i>, ch. 18

Assignment Requirements:

Final Exam: The final exam will be an open notes/open book exam. The exam will be available on Google Classroom and will have a three-hour time limit. It will consist of two sections – section one will have 10 terms/concepts from which you must pick 7 and provide a short answer/definition for. Section two will have 5 essay questions from which you will pick 2. Your answer for each essay question should be no less than one paragraph, but no greater than one page.

Final Paper: The final paper will be a 8-10 page paper analyzing a chosen pericope in Romans. The goal of the paper is to show how your pericope fits into the rhetorical context of the letter, and how that pericope contributes to the Paul’s overall purpose.

“Top Five” Reading Response: This assignment is designed to engage students with the readings by identifying the five most important elements in the readings. See below for instructional guide.

Weekly Discussion Board Posting: Students will contribute weekly to a discussion board on Google Classroom to begin to expand on the ideas present in the readings. Each week will have question prompts to facilitate discussion.

Final Paper Guide

- Paper must be 8-10 pages excluding title page, bibliography, etc. The 8-10 pages must be original research.
- The paper must be uploaded to Google Classroom by the deadline listed on page 2 of the syllabus. Submit the paper as *either* a PDF or Microsoft Word file (preferably a Word file).
- Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic words must be typed out, not transliterated.
- Paper should include an introduction with a clearly-stated thesis statement.
- Paper should be clearly argued and articulated.
- Paper should deal fairly with secondary literature. In other words, you should thoroughly engage both liberal and conservative scholarship. I strongly suggest you engage the *Hermeneia* commentary of Romans.
- Paper should have at least five total references. References of the following kind are acceptable:
 - Academic monographs
 - Articles in scholarly journals

- Academic commentaries
- Reformed literature (academic)
- Literature from any century is fine (i.e. early Christian, reformation, medieval, enlightenment, or modern literature); however, at least 3 sources must be newer than 1950.
- *DO NOT* use popular level literature
- Paper should employ footnotes that are single spaced and 10-point font.
- Each page (after title page) should be numbered according to SBL style guide.
- Paper must employ 12 point font, 1 inch margins on each side, and ½ inch indentation. DO NOT include a space after each paragraph; be aware that MS Word does this automatically.
- All documentation must be done according to the standards in the *SBL Handbook of Style*, both the footnotes and the bibliography.
- Proofread your paper. Ensure all typographical, spelling, and grammatical errors have been corrected.

Final Exam Guide

- The final test will consist of two sections.
 - Section one will be a list of (10) terms from which you will pick (7) and provide a definition. Your definition should demonstrate that you have read and critically engaged with all of the required course readings.
 - Section two will be a list of (5) essay questions from which you will pick (2) and provide an answer. Your answer should demonstrate that you have read and critically engaged with all of the required course readings.
- Because this is an open-book / open-notes test, I expect you to interact with the various views that were presented by both me and your readings. Quotations are not expected, but will be looked upon favorably. The authors you interact with should be fairly treated.
- Grammar and logic will be important in this exam.
- There is a final exam study guide available on Google Classroom. All questions on the final exam can be found on the study guide.

Discussion Board Guide

- Each week will have an attendant discussion board prompt that students must engage with
 - Minimum engagement includes a one paragraph answer to the prompt question, along with interaction with at least one other student.
 - Maximum engagement includes a two-three paragraph answer to the prompt question, along with interaction with two-three students on the discussion board.

Reading Responses, “Top Five” Guide

This assignment asks you to determine five important things to know about a given topic/week after you have completed the assigned reading on that topic.

Each topic will be given a “top five” assessment from the required readings. The format should be as follows:

5. Start with #5 and work your way to #1

Each piece of information should be clearly presented in a brief sentence with a number corresponding to it.

4. You numbered sentences should be bolded.

Under your bolded numbered sentence should be a brief explanation of the piece of information you provided and a brief explanation about why that piece of information is important. This explanation should *not* be bolded.

3. I strongly advise that you not just pick the first five pieces of information that you find in a reading.

A strong list will find information from various points in the reading.

2. You should write your pieces of information and summaries in your own words.

This assignment is not asking you to find quotations from the reading. Nor do I expect you to cite the readings. Rather, part of the assignment is synthesizing the information and thus explaining it in your own words.

1. As always, you should read your writing aloud before submitting it. And remember: any opportunity to make your grader laugh will only improve your score.

Successful writing is largely about successful editing. A read through of your writing does wonders for eliminating spelling and grammatical errors.