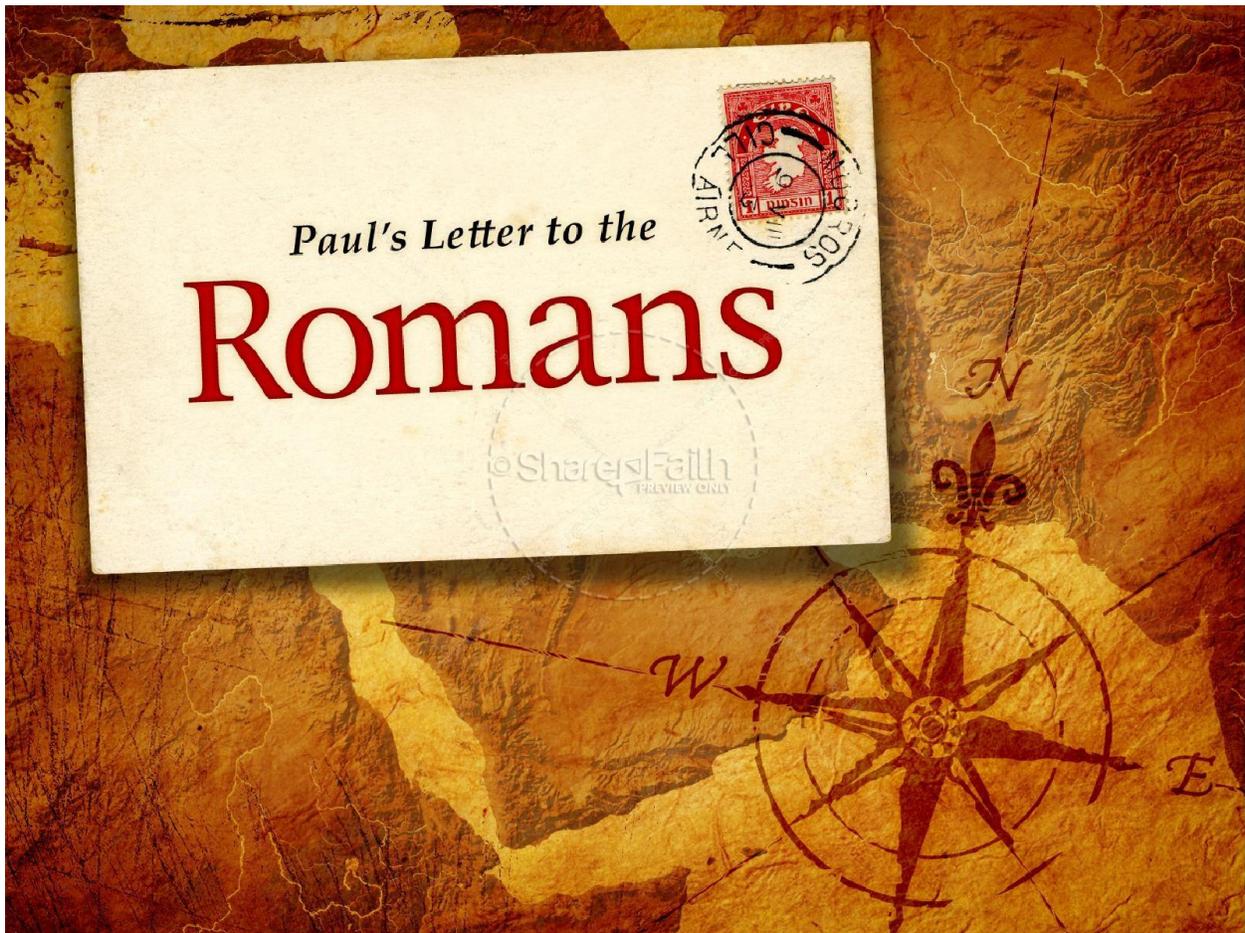


# An Introduction to Saint Paul's Letter to the Romans



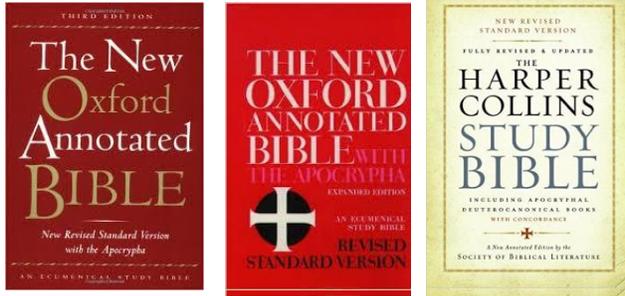
**Date:** October 25, 2016

**Where:** The Library at the Parish of Christ the Redeemer, Pelham

**By:** The Reverend Matthew Hoxsie Mead, Rector

## Bibliography and Recommended Reading on Romans

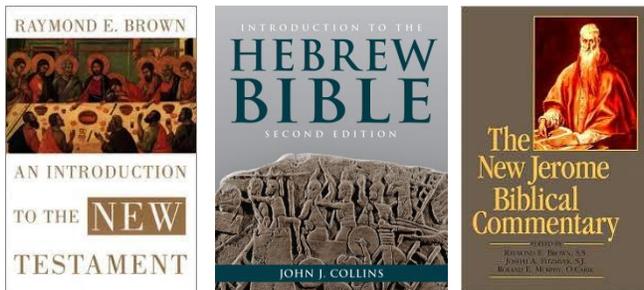
### The 11<sup>th</sup> Commandment: All Episcopalians Need to Own a Study Bible



- New Oxford Annotated Bible NRSV
- New Oxford Annotated Bible RSV
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These are three excellent Study Bibles. The NRSV is the translation of the Bible that we use in church on Sunday. A Study Bible has a scholarly summary of every book in the Bible. Study Bibles have articles about major themes or persons in the Bible. A Study Bible has detailed notes about the text. Own a Study Bible, and mark it up!

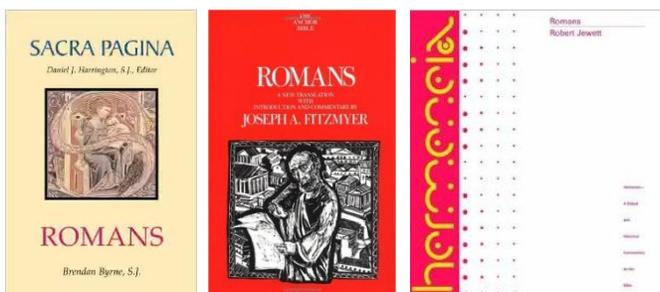
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- An Introduction to the New Testament by Raymond Brown
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If you only buy one of these, buy An Introduction to the New Testament. These are single volume commentaries that introduce readers to the major themes, questions, and background of every book in the Bible.

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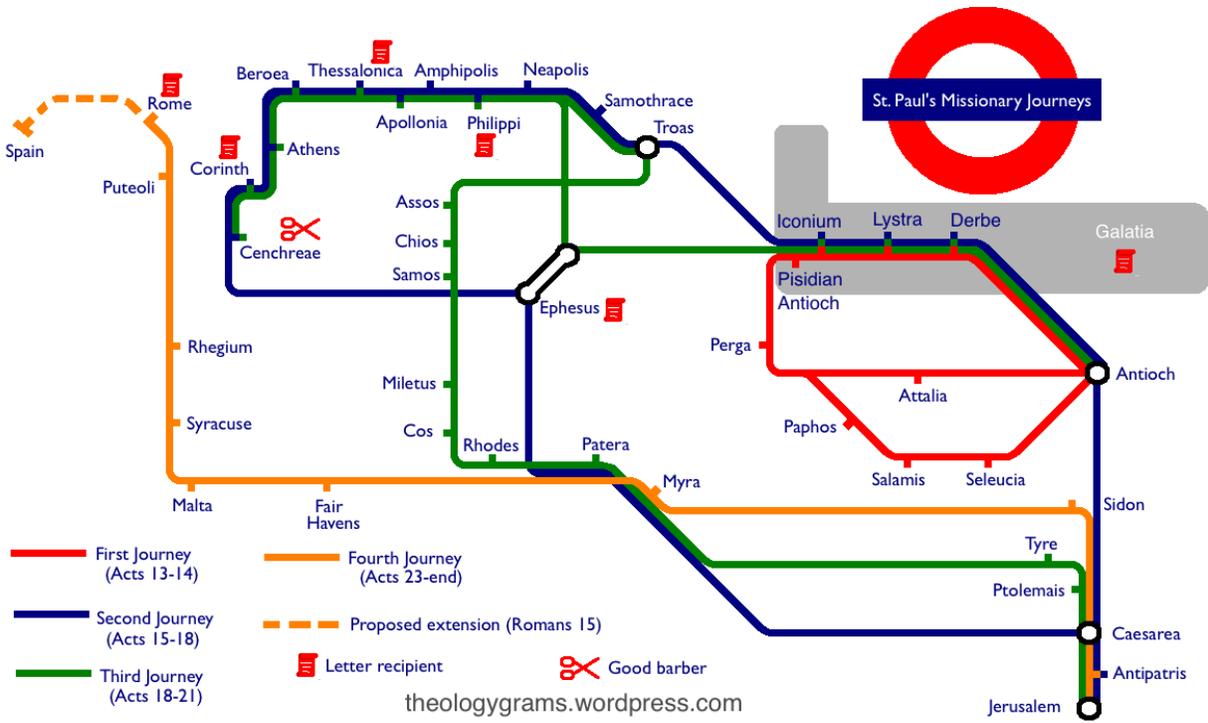
These are in-depth commentaries for scholars and advanced students of Scripture. You don't need to know Greek or Hebrew to understand these, but it will certainly help.

Good Online resource to view a bible: [www.biblegateway.com](http://www.biblegateway.com)

Good Online resource to buy a bible: [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)

## Traditional Timeline of Paul's Journey supported by most scholars

AD36	Conversion to Christ
AD39	Visit to Jerusalem after Damascus
AD40-44	Visit to Cilicia
AD44-45	At Antioch
AD46-49	(First) Missionary Journey Antioch ---> Cyprus and Southern Asia ---> Antioch
AD49	Jerusalem Conference
AD50-52	(Second) Missionary Journey Antioch ---> through Southern Asia Minor ---> N. Galatia ---> Macedonia ---> Corinth (writes 1 Thess) ---> Jerusalem and Antioch
AD54-58	(Third) Missionary Journey Antioch ---> N. Galatia ---> Ephesus (stays 3 years – possibly in prison) (writes Gal, Phlm, Phil, 1 Cor) --->  (Third) Missionary Journey (continued) through Macedonia toward Corinth (writes Gal?, 2Cor) ---> Winters in Corinth/Cenchrea (writes Rom) ---> Jerusalem
AD58-60	Arrested in Jerusalem In Caesarea (in prison 2 years) (writes Phil?)
AD60-61	Journey to Rome by sea
AD61-63	In prison in Rome (writes Phil?, Phlm?)
AD64-?	Death in Rome under Nero



## Basics of the Letter to the Romans (following Raymond Brown)

Date: Winter of AD 57/58

From: Paul in Corinth – precisely at Cenchrea, the port of Corinth

To: “All God’s beloved in Rome, who are called to be saints.”  
Paul had never been to Rome, so he is writing to a community that does not know him.  
He sends an envoy (Phoebe a Deacon), and greets over 20 people in Rome that he does know.  
Jewish Christians in Rome  
Gentile Christians in Rome  
Christians who observe Jewish customs  
Christians who do not observe Jewish customs

Authenticity: Paul wrote this Letter – no serious scholarship contests that.

Unity: A tiny minority of scholars wonder if Romans is two separate letters that have been unified.  
A slightly larger minority questions whether chapter 16 was later added (still probably written by Paul).  
Marcion (c. AD140) (early Christian who has a heresy named after him) argued that 9-11 are not written by Paul. No serious scholars agree with that.

Outline of Letter: A) Opening (1:1-7)  
B) Thanksgiving (1:8-10)  
C) Body of Letter (1:11-15:13)  
D) Concluding Formulas & Doxology (15:14-16:23 & 16:25-27)

## **Division by Contents of the Letter to the Romans (following Raymond Brown)**

1:1-15                      Address/greeting, Thanksgiving, Proem about Paul's wish to come to Rome.

1:16-11:36                Doctrinal/Teaching Section

Part 1 of Doctrinal/Teaching Section

- 1:1-16-4:25    Uprightness of God revealed through the Gospel
  - 1:18-3:20     God's wrath and sins of Gentiles and Jews
  - 3:21-4:25     Justification by faith apart from the Law

Part 2 of Doctrinal/Teaching Section

- 5:1-8:39        God's salvation for those justified by faith

Part 3 of Doctrinal/Teaching Section

- 9:1-11:36      God's promised to Israel

12:1-15:13                Hortatory/Encouragement Section

Part 1 of Hortatory/Encouragement Section

- 12:1-13:14     Authoritative advice on Christian living

Part 1 of Hortatory/Encouragement Section

- 14:1-15:13     The "strong" owe love to the "weak"

15:14-33                 Paul's travel plans and a blessing

16:1-23                    Recommendation of Phoebe and greeting to people in Rome

16:25                      Greetings from the scribe who write the letter

16:25-27                 Concluding doxology

## Chapter by Chapter Digest of the Letter to the Romans

- 1) Paul, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of Son promised through prophets, descendant of David, through Spirit declared Son of God by resurrection. We received call to spread to Gentiles. Long to see you but have been prevented so far. Not afraid to preach gospel for righteous will live by faith. Wrath of god is revealed against all wicked men who knew God but never glorified Him and worshipped images of men and birds and reptiles. He gave them over to their sinful desires for sex, etc. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them.
- 2) Speech of boastful Gentile: You who pass judgment on others are also condemned, because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself. To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life. But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger, glory, honor and peace for everyone who does good: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. Speech of boastful Jew: Jews who declare one thing and do another rob temple, adultery, etc. Circumcision has value if you observe the law, but if you break the law, you have become as though you had not been circumcised. If those who are not circumcised keep the law's requirements, will they not be regarded as though they were circumcised, a man is a Jew if he is one inwardly.
- 3) There is much advantage in being Jew or being circumcised. Jews were entrusted with words of God. God is not unjust. Argument of the sinner who thinks God is not just saying let us do evil so good will be result. No one is righteous and does good, list of psalms. No one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin. Righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe, all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. Jesus is sacrifice of atonement. Boasting is excluded. Man is justified by faith apart from law. God is god of Jews and Gentiles since there is only one God. We uphold not nullify law by faith.

- 4) Abraham believed God and faith was credited as righteousness. David says blessed are they whose sins are forgiven. Abraham's faith was before circumcision. Therefore he is father of all who believe, circumcised or not. Abraham's promise not through law but through righteousness from faith. Promise is for all Abraham's offspring, all of us. Abraham was 100 years old and Sarah was also near death but he still had faith in God. We who believe in Jesus are justified.
- 5) We have peace with God through Christ. Suffering produces perseverance. Christ died just at the right time for the ungodly. Very rarely does someone die for an unrighteous man. When we were God's enemies we were reconciled through Christ's death, how much more will we be saved through his resurrection. Sin came to world through one man and spread to all. Death reigned from Adam to Moses. The gift is different than the original sin. The gift of God followed many sins and brought righteousness. Just as one sin and disobedience condemned all men, one act of righteousness and obedience brings life for all men.
- 6) Should we continue to sin? No. We died to sin how can we still live in it. We died through Baptism with Christ and were buried and will likewise be united in his resurrection. Christ cannot die again, death no longer has mastery over Christ, he died for sin once and for all. Count yourselves dead for sin but alive to God. Do not offer your body to sin but offer yourselves to God. You are not under law but under grace. You are slaves to either sin or obedience. You have been set free from sin and are now slaves to righteousness and God. The wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ.
- 7) Law has authority only as long as you live. Just like a woman whose husband died and can freely marry. You died to law so you could belong to another. Is the law sin? No. I would not have known what sin was except through the law. I would not know what coveting was. The command that was intended to bring life brought death because sin deceived me. I do what I do not want to do. I hate what I do because sin lives in me. Nothing good is in me because sin lives in me. Under the law I am a prisoner and slave to sin but I have been rescued by Jesus.

- 8) Jesus set me free from law of sin and death. God sent his own son in likeness of sinful man so that righteous requirements of law might be satisfied. The mind of sinful man is death but the mind controlled by the spirit is peace and life. Those controlled by sin cannot please god. You are controlled by spirit if spirit is in you and your body is dead but your spirit is alive. If you live according to sinful nature you will die. If you put to death misdeeds of body you will live. You receive the spirit of son-ship and cry Abba, Father. We are children and heirs of god and co-heirs with Christ that we may share in his suffering and glory. Creation waits for sons of God to be revealed. Whole creation has groaned in pains of childbirth. We wait eagerly for our adoption as sons. We wait for what we hope for and in our hope we are saved. God predestined those to be in likeness of son he called and justified and glorified. If God who did not spare his own son is for us who can be against us. Jesus condemns and is at right hand of God will intercede for us, God Justifies. Nothing (life, death, persecution, angels, etc) at all can separate us from love of God in Christ.
- 9) I have great sorrow in my heart for I wish I were cursed for the people of Israel. Theirs are the Jewish traditions, temple, patriarchs, etc. God's word did not fail for not all who are descended from Israel are Israel. God's children are not natural children but children of the promise. God's promise to Abraham and Sarah. Story of Jacob and Esau. God said to Moses he will have mercy or compassion on who he will. Pharaoh was hardened because God willed it. Shall what is formed say: why did you make me like this, potter and clay, objects used by God. Israel stumbled over stone that God laid in Zion.
- 10) My prayer is that Jews will be saved. They are zealous for God. Christ is end of law so there will be righteousness for all who believe. Do not say who will ascend or descend but confess that Jesus is Lord and believe that God raised him you will be saved. You believe with heart and confess with mouth. The same Lord is Lord of Jew and Gentile. How can they call on the one they have not believed in or believe in the one they have not heard. Not all of Israel accepted good news. Uses Moses and Isaiah to show that God revealed himself to those who did not ask but Israel is disobedient.

- 11) Did God reject his people. No. I am an Israelite, and Benjaminite. Elijah appealed to God against Israel. Changes remnant to those who are chosen by grace not works. God made it so Israel could not hear or see. Did they stumble so they can't recover, No, they are supposed to be envious of the Gentiles. Their rejection is reconciliation of the world and their acceptance will be even more great. Example of olive tree. Gentiles are grafted on after Jews have been broken off. But they will be grafted in again so you better be careful not to be conceited. Israel is hardened until gentiles come in. They are enemies of Gospel but loved through election. Their disobedience will gain them mercy. All are disobedient so God can have mercy on all.
- 12) I urge you to offer your bodies in view of God's mercy as a living sacrifice. We each have one body with many members and so in Christ we who are many belong to one body. There are also many gifts (slightly different than the gifts in Cor). List of things to do, hate evil, be joyful, faithful in prayer, be hospitable, bless and do not curse, etc. Do not take revenge but leave room for God's wrath, feed and your enemy and you will heap coals on his head.
- 13) Submit to the authorities. Love one another, commandments are summed up in love your neighbor. Salvation is near, night is almost over and day is almost here. Let us not have orgies and debauchery, but clothe yourselves in Christ.
- 14) Some eat vegetables, some consider some days sacred, whether we live or die we belong to the Lord. Do not judge brother because we will all stand before judgment. It is written that every tongue will confess to God. Do not put any stumbling block in front of your brother by eating something. Let us do what leads to peace, do not destroy God for sake of food. Better not to eat meat if it causes your brother to fall.
- 15) Everything written in past was for our endurance and hope. Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God. Christ servant of Jews so Gentiles will glorify God. I am convinced that you are full of goodness and able to instruct one another. I am sent to Gentiles so gentiles can be sacrifice to God. from Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum, I have fully proclaimed the gospel of Christ. I preach where Christ was not known. I plan to go to Spain and see you on the way. I am going to Jerusalem to drop off contribution from Macedonia and Achaia. Pray my service in Jerusalem will be acceptable.
- 16) I commend Phoebe, greet a whole bunch of people. Watch out for flatterers and smooth talkers who deceive naive people. Tertius wrote letter. Mystery has been revealed so all nations might believe.

## Questions to ponder when reading Romans

- Justification/Uprightness/Righteousness/Justice
  - This is one of the most important issues for Paul and many Christians throughout history.
  - What is justification? Grace? Time for some research?
  - Hint – read Paul’s Letter to the Galatians which deals with this in a simpler way.
- Sin and repentance
  - The act of repentance is something that the Gospel writers (including Luke who travelled with Paul) take seriously.
  - Paul argues strongly that all grace and forgiveness is a gift from God.
  - How does repentance fit into Paul’s view of Grace?
- Observance of the Jewish Law
  - Paul is for the Jewish Law, but then he seems to say it doesn’t matter?
  - Maybe Paul is addressing
- The Weak & the Strong
  - Technically this is about food
    - The weak are those who refrain from meat (sacrificed to idols, in general, non-kosher, pork?) and observe holy days
    - The strong are those who feel they can eat anything and don’t observe holy days
  - The issue of food is a symptom of a larger problem that might break the community, and if not treated properly, the symptom will be the “cause” of a fracture in the Roman Christian community.
  - Can this inform other “issues” that might be the “cause” of a fracture in the modern Christian communities?
- Original Sin (Romans 5:12-21)
  - Whoa! This is where the idea of Original Sin comes from.
  - But St. Augustine is actually the one who interprets this passage and attaches what might have been a spiritual concept in Paul that was simply obvious since everyone has sin, so a biological concept
  - How does the idea of original sin influence other church teachings (for example, St. Mary the Virgin)?

- Universalism
  - Paul seems in the same passage (5:12-21) to hint at universalism (God's grace is given to all, and eternal life is given to all through Jesus Christ)? How do original sin and universalism fit together? What of free will?
  
- Predestination
  - The topic of predestination comes up overtly in Romans (8:29-30), how does being predestined for something affect free will?
  - Is Paul talking about all humans at all times or a specific group (Jews/Gentiles) at a specific time – does that matter?
  - Does Paul mention predestination in the context of damnation or only how some are to be saved?
  
- Respect the Authorities
  - To say the least, the start of Chapter 13 stands in sharp contrast to the Revelation to John.
  - What situation might Paul be addressing or familiar with that he would be so pro-Roman? What was his background?
  - What changed by the time Revelation is written?
  
- Divinity of Jesus
  - Romans 9:5 is one of the most important verses in the New Testament... depending on how it is punctuated. Most scholars translate and punctuate the verse as the NRSV does.
  - "...from them, according to the flesh, comes the Messiah, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen."
  
- Women Deacons/Apostles/Leaders
  - Phoebe is a Deacon; Junia is an apostle
  - What were Paul's assumptions about women leadership?
  - What is an apostle? What did Paul think a Deacon was?
  - What is a Priest or a Bishop? Then? Today?
  
- Homosexuality
  - Romans 1:26-27 is one of those verses that must be dealt with when discussing what the Bible (and Paul) says about homosexuality.
  - What does Paul actually say here?
  - How might what Paul says about the strong and the weak inform the modern church issue/schisms related to homosexuality and same sex marriage.