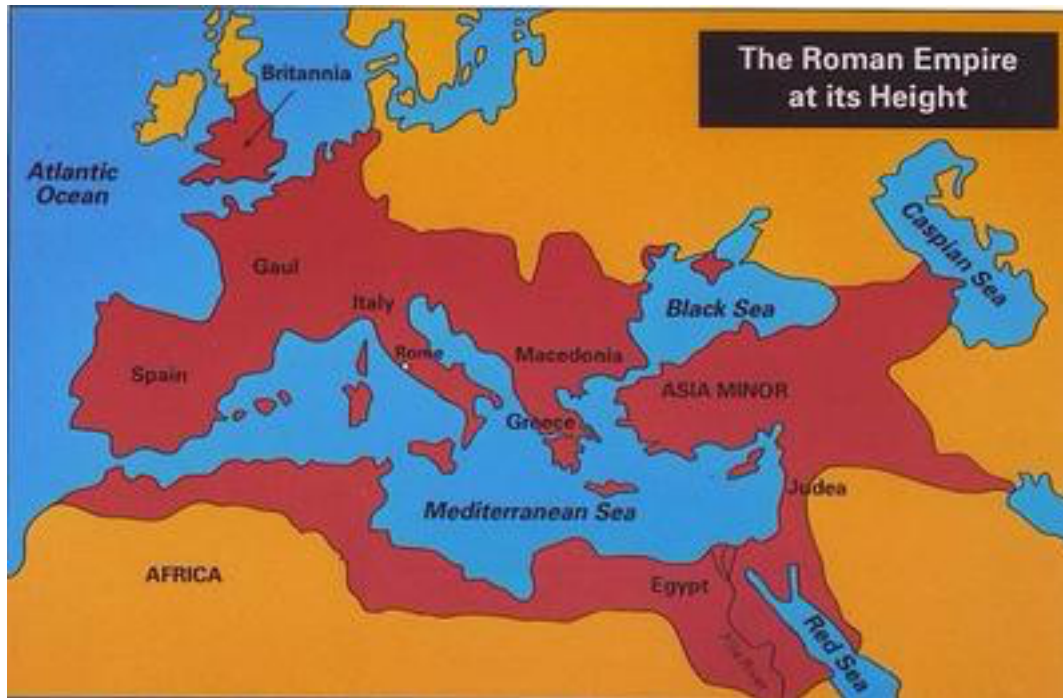


Union Bethel AME Church (dial-in and Facebook™ Live)
Bible Study Dial-in Number: (425) 436-6260 Access Code: 141997#
Tuesday, June 16, 2020, **Note time change 5:45 – 6:30 PM**

Paul's Letter to the Church at Rome (Romans)



The monk Martin Luther was deeply influenced by the words in Romans. The concepts of sin and redemption and drawing close to God through Christ Jesus compelled Luther to begin the Protestant Reformation. Years later Paul's letter to the church in Rome stirred missionary John Wesley to completely submit to Christ. That encounter led to the Wesleyan Revival that swept across England.

It is important to understand the Roman government that Paul encountered during his appeal to be heard in front of a Roman tribunal. As we discussed earlier, Paul was a Roman citizen by birth. Status as a Roman citizen was coveted. Some military leaders were not citizens. Others paid a fee to obtain citizenship. Roman slaves became citizens when freed if their masters were citizens. Citizens had special rights that Paul exercised to get to Rome, including the right to be governed only by Roman law and not by local laws.

The Roman Empire was a republican form of government. It has a governing body, the senate, that set laws for the empire. Eventually the republic transformed to a dictatorship ruled by a Caesar. The first emperor was Julius Caesar. Octavian “Augustus” Caesar assumed the throne after the death of his uncle Julius. Nero was the emperor at the time Paul made his appeal for a trial in Rome. Nero was also the emperor who is responsible for the death of Paul.

Paul did not establish the church in Rome. However, the Christians in Rome knew who Paul was and welcomed him. Paul was aware that due to the mixing of many different cultures his words to the Romans needed to clarify the many different interpretations of the Gospel. Paul was at the seat of power of the Empire. His words to direct the Christians in Rome toward evangelism and to convert non-believers needed to counter all of the pagan influences from life in the empire.

Romans 1:1-6

1 Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, **2** which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures, **3** the gospel concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh **4** 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, **5** 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, **6** including yourselves who are called to belong to Jesus Christ,

This is a very long-winded introduction. Why did Paul take such care with his introduction to the letter?

Romans 1:7-10

7 To all God’s beloved in Rome, who are called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. **8** First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed throughout the world. **9** For God, whom I serve with my spirit by

announcing the gospel of his Son, is my witness that without ceasing I remember you always in my prayers, **10** asking that by God's will I may somehow at last succeed in coming to you.

Why did Paul refer to the Christians in Rome as saints? How big is this world that Paul says has heard about the faith of the Christians in Rome?

Romans 1:11-15

11 For I am longing to see you so that I may share with you some spiritual gift to strengthen you— **12** or rather so that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine. **13** I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that I have often intended to come to you (but thus far have been prevented), in order that I may reap some harvest among you as I have among the rest of the Gentiles. **14** I am a debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish **15** —hence my eagerness to proclaim the gospel to you also who are in Rome.

Why was Paul so eager to get to Rome?
