

January 24, 2021 - David Baumgartner

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Date: 24 January 2021

Preacher: David Baumgartner

[0 : 00] We welcome you to the media ministry of Bethel Community Church. Knowing Jesus, making Jesus known. We completed our series of topical messages last week and we looked at various subjects.

And I would say that all of them were very helpful and informative. I enjoyed the last two weeks because we looked at some missionary activities around the world.

It really proves that God is still saving people today. Isn't that wonderful? Just to know that. Well, this morning we're going to be starting a new sermon series.

We're going to be looking at the book of Romans. I'm told that Bethel actually studied the book of Romans before. And this was over 25 years ago before we came.

So maybe it's going to be a review for some of you. So, anyway, if you have your Bibles, please turn with me to Romans chapter 1. You know, thinking of missions, there's a great connection between Romans and missions.

[1 : 09] I'll give you a couple reasons. First of all, Romans is a missionary book. It was written by a missionary while he was on a missionary journey.

And a second reason, as we'll see, one of the main reasons that he wrote this book was to promote more missionary activities around the world.

Now, I'm talking about he. He did this. To whom am I referring? Well, Paul, of course. In fact, verse 1 opens with the name Paul.

It's how he opens. There's no other identifiers. It doesn't say Paul from Tarsus or something like that, what tribe he's from. Just Paul. Paul opens all of his 12 epistles just like that.

Paul. So I believe that his reputation was very well known throughout the whole Roman Empire. This was not his first letter.

[2 : 09] And so you may ask this question, why is Romans listed first, right after Acts? Well, a lot of possible reasons for that.

But I think most likely it's because if you look at the very end of the book of Acts, which is actually a history book, we find Paul where? He's in Rome. He's in Rome.

But he's under house arrest. And so anyway, you see that he's in Rome. And so perhaps it fits right there. All I want to do this morning. We're going to have an easy morning.

All I want to do is introduce this book. We're going to be looking at a few key verses here. And look, talk about the church. Talk about when it was written.

But I'd like to focus mostly on why Paul wrote this letter to the book of Romans, to the church at Rome. Let's go ahead and first pray. Heavenly Father, we're so grateful that we can come here today and to look at your word and to just be refreshed, Lord, of who you are and all that you've done for us.

[3 : 18] There's so many things that have been shared already this morning about your goodness, your faithfulness. And Lord, we're reminded each and every morning that your mercies are there.

Thank you so much for that, Lord. Lord, we pray that through the ministry of your word and the power of your spirit that we would leave here as refreshed, changed people, Lord, sanctified by your word.

We thank you for that in Jesus' name. Amen. So let me ask you this question. When you hear their name, Paul, what do you think about? A lot of good things.

I think mostly for me, it's his missionary journeys. In fact, when you look at the history book of Acts, you'll see it's filled with all of these missionary journeys that Paul went on.

There's no indication that Paul ever visited Rome before he wrote this letter. So you might ask this question. Well, how did it come about that there would be believers in the city of Rome at this time?

[4 : 25] Yeah. Paul wasn't there. How did that happen? Well, we really don't know exactly. But some say that the church there was founded by the apostle Peter.

I mean, he's the first pope. And the Vatican is only some two miles away from Rome. You might think of it as a suburb, just like Webster Groves is to St. Louis, the city.

Well, I would say that's very doubtful. I will say that. I'll give you a couple. Are you glad to hear that? A couple of reasons why. First of all, Peter is not mentioned anywhere in this entire letter.

But here's an even better reason. If Peter had visited Rome, as an apostle that is, Paul would not have written this letter. I believe that's true.

And we're going to see why. It's because his personal policy, and we'll see this in chapter 15, verse 20. His policy was to go where no other apostle had gone before.

[5 : 30] According to church historians, the church in Rome actually began by a group of Jews who attended the Feast of Pentecost in Jerusalem.

In fact, it's even recorded in Acts chapter 2, verse 10. It even says visitors from Rome were there. Now, these Jews, of course, they would have been there because Jews were required to visit Jerusalem to attend at least one of three major feasts.

And the Feast of Pentecost was one of them. And so here they are. They're there. This would have been the year 33 AD. But they experienced something very unusual that day.

And I hope all of you know to what I'm referring. It's in Acts chapter 2. It's when they were filled. The believers were filled with the Holy Spirit.

And not only that, it goes on in Acts and tells us that they heard Peter speak. And it says that some 3,000 souls were saved that day. Oh, I praise God.

[6 : 37] What a wonderful day that was. 3,000 souls were converted that day. Well, so those visitors from Rome returned home as new believers.

They were changed. They were sanctified initially. And their new life began that day. Well, what happens after you get saved?

What do you do? You start telling people, right? You start telling people what happened, what you saw, what you heard. Friends, family members, coworkers, fellow Jews, and Gentiles, they told. And evidently, many of these people who heard, they believed as well. And so, boy, what a great way to bring others to Christ. Just to share what happened to you.

Share what you learned. Share what you saw. Share what happened to you. You don't have to have a fancy speech prepared. Just tell people what happened to you. Well, by the time Paul writes this letter, which is about 25 years later, that church would have grown.

[7 : 45] It would have grown there. And there would have been Jewish believers and Gentile believers. As we'll see, there will be in this letter, several Jewish believers are named.

Here are some of their names. Prisca, Aquila, Andronicus, Junia, Herodian, Rufus. He talks about his and Rufus' mother. We're also going to see several passages directed toward Gentile believers. I think this is something kind of interesting here. Many Bible teachers believe that the majority of Christians in Rome at this time would have been Gentiles.

Yeah. Why is that? Well, there's a couple reasons here. For one thing, even though the population of Rome about this time would be about a million people, they say that only 1% to 2% of the population would have been Jewish.

It's interesting. And then, but there's secondly, there's some passages that we're going to see where Paul directs his teaching specifically to the Gentiles.

[8 : 55] We're going to look at this one in Romans chapter 11. He says, I'm speaking to you, you Gentiles. I'm telling you this. Here's a third reason, though. As we're going to see in several passages, Paul's going to emphasize that his ministry is to what?

It's to the Gentiles. And so those are three good reasons why it may have been mostly Gentiles. Let's look at this here. When was this letter written?

You know, what are the circumstances? What's the occasion of it? It's generally believed that this letter was written to the church of Rome while Paul was in Corinth.

And this is toward the end of his third missionary journey. So if you look, maybe if you have a timeline in your Bible, probably around 57 or 58 AD.

I think that's true because there's several passages in his letter that point to that. If you have your Bibles, turn with me to chapter 16. I'm going to look at a few verses here.

[10:01] In verse 23 of chapter 16, we see that Paul names a few people. Look with me here. And by the way, this is the closing commendations here.

This is how they wrote letters back then. You would have like the greeting and the closing commendations at the end of the letter. Well, look at these names that Paul mentions here beginning in verse 23.

Gaius, host to me and the whole church greets you. And just keep that in mind. And then he says, Erastus, the city treasurer greets you.

And Quartus, the brother. This Gaius here is probably the same guy who's mentioned in 1 Corinthians chapter 1. Who Paul actually, one of the men that Paul baptized.

Yeah, Paul baptized some people. And Gaius is one of them. Here's another name. Paul also mentions the name Erastus. Do you see that? In verse 23.

[11:03] He was the city treasurer of Corinth. Now this has been proven because archaeologists have discovered an inscription that was written in stone.

And they found it besides a large theater in the city of Corinth. And on that stone was etched. It says, placed here by Erastus, the city treasurer in appreciation for his election.

How about that? They had an election in Corinth. I wonder how that went. I won't say anything more. There's a couple reasons there.

A couple names here. How about notice if you go to chapter 16. How about verse 1. Paul mentions this name Phoebe. He says, I commend to you our sister Phoebe.

Who is a servant of the church which is at Sentia. Sentia. Now Sentia is only six miles away from Corinth. So maybe a little further out from like Webster Groves to St. Louis.

[12:10] But it's generally believed that Phoebe is the one who carried this letter to Rome. So just a couple points here to go over that, you know, why or when this letter was written.

But here's the main thing I'd really like to look at. Why did Paul write this letter? And the first one is this. Love of the brethren.

Yeah. Isn't that something that you and I all should have? You know, what a wonderful thing to have love. The fellowship that we have of the brethren. Many of the believers that we're going to be reading about would have either been converts.

Or they would have been associates of Paul. In other parts of the Roman Empire. If you continue on in the closing here in chapter 16.

He says in verse 3. Greet Prisca and Aquila. And look at what he says. My fellow workers in Christ Jesus. Who for my life risk their own necks.

[13:16] To whom not only do I give thanks. But also all the churches of the Gentiles. What a great thing to say about somebody. Some people who risk their necks for Paul.

How about verse 5. He says greet Eponatus. My beloved. Who is the first convert to Christ in Asia. Boy it's going to be great to meet that guy one day.

Isn't it? What was that like to be the first convert in all of Asia? He goes on here. In verse 6. Greet Mary who has worked hard for you.

We don't know which Mary this is. But it will be exciting to get to meet her one day. The main point here is that. By the way. How would you like to be complimented by Paul like this?

For your life. Look with me verse 7. He says greet Andronicus and Junius. My kinsmen and my fellow prisoners.

[14:14] Who are outstanding among the apostles. Who were in Christ before me. We're going to be looking at this verse later. But then he says greet Herodian in verse 11.

My kinsmen. Verse 7 and verse 11. He uses that word kinsmen. That word there. In the Greek actually is referring to. Those of the same blood.

And so it's a good chance. That these people were actually related to Paul. Maybe they were cousins or something. We don't know. The main point here. Is that as we're going to see.

There's many names mentioned here. And here's the thing. Paul cared about each one of them. Each person had a story to tell.

And he sends their greetings. Isn't that a great thing to think about your life? My life? Do you have a story to tell? Do you have a testimony that you can tell?

[15:14] Some of you aren't grandparents yet. Lord willing if you are. You'll have stories to tell your grandchildren. And what a great thing that is. And especially when you think about the fellowship.

The sweet love and fellowship that we have. That Paul would write to these people. Mention their names. Think about the value of fellowship if we didn't have it.

You know imagine that. As times get tougher and tougher. The importance of fellowship. So I think that's just the first reason.

You just get it out there. It's because Paul's love for the brethren. Here's the second reason for this letter. It's to promote further missionary efforts.

I already mentioned this before here. If you turn in your Bibles to chapter 15. In this chapter 15.

Paul's talking about his missionary efforts.

[16:12] Notice in verse 19. Just to pick it up here. He says from Jerusalem. All the way around to Illichrium. I have fully proclaimed the gospel of Christ.

In other words. Toward the end of his third missionary journey. Paul was able to say. I've preached the gospel. Not only that. I fully preached the gospel.

To all around. From Jerusalem to Illichrium. By the way. If you look on a map. You'll see that's a large area. Just north of Macedonia.

That's a big area. Friends. You know. You just think about the influence. That Paul had. Historians estimate. That at the close.

Of the apostolic period. And that's generally. That's the first century. There were about a half a million Christians. In the whole Roman Empire. And you just kind of wonder.

[17:13] How many of them were a result. Of either directly. A direct result of Paul's ministry. Or maybe somebody that was brought to Christ. By Paul. Notice here in verse 20.

That same chapter. He says. It has always been my ambition. To preach the gospel. Where Christ was not known. So that I would not be building.

On someone else's foundation. Here we see. Paul's ambition. Or maybe you might think of it. As his intention. Only to go. To territories. Where people.

Had not heard. Of Jesus Christ. Where we're going to be seeing more. About this. In the upcoming weeks. Notice here if you go on. He begins to quote the Old Testament.

Isaiah chapter 52. Look at me verse 21. As it was written. Those who were not told about him. He's talking about Christ here. Will see.

[18:11] And those who have not heard. Will understand. He's talking about Gentiles here. It's kind of interesting. To me that Paul sees himself. As fulfilling Old Testament prophecy.

And then he says in verse 22. This is why. I have often been hindered. From coming to you. So. He's giving them a reason. Why he hasn't been able to visit them.

Those in Rome. He's been busy. Proclaiming the gospel. And look with me in verse 23. But now. That there's no more place to go.

For me to work. In these regions. You just stop right there. What? There's no further place to go. For Paul. That's amazing.

Imagine that. And then for 23 continues. And he says. Since I've been longing. For many years to visit you.

[19:10] And then verse 24. I plan to do so. When I go to Spain. And look at this. I hope to see you. While passing through.

And to have you assist me. On my journey there. After I have enjoyed your company. For a while. Here's the main point here friends. Paul's planning.

To take his ministry. Further. Into Spain. Wow. That's new territory. For the gospel. And he's asking these Roman Christians.

I want your support. I want you to help me. In doing this. You see. The believers in Rome. Could serve as a base of operations.

For future ministry. West. And I think this makes sense. Doesn't it? I mean. Just consider here. These. These brothers and sisters.

[20:05] Are living in the heart. Of the Roman Empire. And they could be very influential. Very helpful. In. Toward the spread of the gospel. To Spain.

And beyond. So. What a great. And noble. Plan. That Paul is talking about here. What a great vision. Of how God can use people.

You think about the exhortations. In God's word. How would God like to use Bethel? Now you're not going to see that. In the Bible here. Referring to a church in Webster Groves.

Referring to a group of believers. That meet here. But we know it's there. We know it because the Bible tells us. The great vision of how God can use us.

God has placed each one of us. In this place. In this time. For a reason. And perhaps through this book. Romans.

[21 : 04] We will see why. More and more clearly. Great plans. That Paul has. Great plans that God has. But there's a problem.

There's a problem. That needed to be addressed. Which I think is the third reason. Why Paul wrote this letter. There was tension. And disunity.

Among the believers in Rome. Now. How can that be? I mean. Isn't church life. All peaches and cream? Yeah.

Yeah. I see a lot of grins out there. Yeah. No. It's not. One. Here's what's going on. One group of believers. Was looking down.

On the other group. Now. You know. Who am I talking about? I'm talking about. Gentile believers. Were looking down. On Jewish believers. If you would. Please turn to chapter.

[22 : 01] 11. With me. Just look at what he says here. In chapter 11. Verse 18. He's talking to Gentiles. And he says.

Do not be arrogant. Toward the branches. But if you are arrogant. Remember that it is not you. Who supports the root. But the root. Supports you. We're going to see.

What this means. But he's talking about. Jews and Gentiles. And he's. And he's comparing. About how the. How the Gentiles. Are actually benefiting.

From all of the history. That the Jewish. The Jewish faith. Brings to. The Gentiles. You might want to ask this question.

How did this tension develop. Between Jews and Gentiles. These are. These are believers in Rome. The church started. With Jewish believers.

[22 : 57] Right. And here we find. Tension. We're not exactly sure. How the tension began. But something did happen. In the year.

A.D. 49. Very interesting here. And it got so bad. That the emperor. Of Rome. Whose name is Claudius. Kicked out.

All the Jews. From Rome. You actually see this. This is confirmed. In Acts chapter 18. Verse 2. Let me read this to you. You don't have to turn there.

But I'm sure many of you. Are familiar with this. Paul is writing here. And he says. After these things. He. This is referring to Paul. Luke is actually writing this. After these things.

Paul. Left. Anthos. And went to Corinth. And he found a certain Jew. Named Aquila. A native of Pontus. Having recently come from Italy.

[23 : 52] With his wife Priscilla. And here's why. Because Claudius. Had commanded all the Jews. To leave Rome. What that means. Is that this emperor Claudius.

Kicked all of the Jews. Out of Rome. At this time. And so for a while. The church in Rome. Would have been exclusively. Gentiles.

Boy. Imagine that. You come to church one day. And you find that all your. Gentile friends are missing. Yeah. What's that like?

Maybe we'll find that out. Except we're probably all Gentiles here. But imagine that. You come to church. And you find that several of your.

Your friends are gone. And so. Really something to think about here. Well Emperor Claudius died. About five years.

[24 : 49] After that pronouncement. He died in 54 AD. And so many of the Jews. Would have filtered back in. To Rome. At this time. Including believers.

And now that for some reason. There's tension here. What's going on? Well we really don't exactly know. But Paul sure has some stern words.

For these Gentiles. It's interesting. He doesn't have any stern words. For his fellow Jews. His words. His exhortations. Are for the Gentiles.

And it kind of reminds me. About anti-Semitism. It's still alive and well today. It really is. Maybe sometime. We'll have a chance. To talk about that. We'll see that God has made promises.

To the Jewish nation. And those are still out there. But whatever the reason is. For the tension. Paul needs to address this. He needs to address.

[25 : 48] This internal strife. And this conflict. That's going on. Because if he doesn't. Or if they don't heed his words. That's going to hinder.

Their missionary. And ministry efforts. Regardless. Of how grand. Their plans might be. Their plans will be hindered. Because of internal strife.

We had a leadership meeting this week. And I tell you what. It was excellent. There are so many good things. In the works.

And we're going to be talking. More and more about these things. In the upcoming weeks. As we get to the business meeting. And so on. Wonderful things. But I'll tell you what friends.

No matter how grand. Bethel Community Church's plans are. Internal conflict. Will hinder them. It's a guarantee. It did it.

[26 : 48] It will hinder him in Rome. It'll hinder our efforts. In Webster Groves. Jesus himself said. In chapter 3 of Mark. If a house is divided against itself.

He asked. Will that. He says. That house will not be able to stand. Well. Here's this tension. How is Paul going to address this? What will he say to them?

Well. That leads to the final. And fourth reason. For this letter. He doesn't threaten them. He doesn't say. You know. You guys better get along. Or else. When I come.

You're going to get it. No he doesn't. Instead. He presents. The clearest. And brightest. Teaching. On the gospel. In this letter here.

Spiritual truth. From God's point of view. And friends. This is where this book. Really stands out. Did you know that Romans.

[27 : 45] Is the longest. Of Paul's letters. Yeah. It contains over 7,000 words. In the Greek text. Number two. Is 1 Corinthians.

And that's only at 6,800. In it. We're going to. In this book. We're going to see. Explanations. For what we see. In this life.

Here's. Why are things. The way they are. We're going to see. How God has given. Every person. A conscience. And that. Through what we see.

In the natural world. Around us. Any reasonable person. Would be able to know. There is a God. That's settled. It's final.

I know there's a God. And yet. We'll see that. It also. Explained. How mankind. Has turned. His back. On that. And instead.

[28 : 40] Turned. To vain reasoning. Which leads. To degrading. Lifestyles. Us. And if you want proof. Of that. That that's where we're at today.

Just listen to the news. Better yet. Don't listen to the news. It's depressing. But friends. We will see. God's remedy. For all this.

And it's the good news. Of his divine plan. Of salvation. The gospel. Many people. Refer to Paul's teaching here. As the Roman road.

Have you ever heard of that? Yeah. Many of you have. Now. This book. Is not a complete summary. Of Paul's. Entire theology. Just to give you an example.

There's only. Just a couple. References. To end times. But I'll tell you what. What's there. Is really great. Because. It's regarding. How God's made promises.

[29 : 35] To the nation. Israel. And he's not through. With those. We're not going to see. Much talked about. With the Lord's Supper. Which kind of surprises me.

But there's many. Many. Other teachings. And doctrines. That we'll see. That are helpful. And beneficial. For all of us. Here's. Here's how the believers. Can overcome.

Their internal conflict. It's in Romans. Chapter 10. Verse 12. There's no distinction. Between Jew and Greek. For the same Lord. Is Lord of all. Abounding in riches.

For all who call upon him. Rather. A rather simple thing. For such a. Profound problem. That we have. Well we're going to be hearing more about this.

More exciting things. In this letter. To the church at Rome. If I could ask the musicians. To come up. I wanted to end with. Just a couple thoughts here. How can you and I.

[30 : 33] Benefit. From this book. Well here's the first one. Come. With your Bibles. Please bring your Bible.

Come prepared. Read ahead. If you would. Because we want others. Around us. To know the Roman road. Don't we?

But before we can tell others. You and I. Ourselves. Need to be able to know the Roman road. So that we can walk the Roman road. So that we can tell others.

The Roman road. Because the fact is friends. You and I need the gospel. Every day. Don't we? We do. As believers. This is our time.

To live. Friends. This is our time. To have an impact. On this world. You might want to think about. Placing yourself. In Rome.

[31 : 30] Think about that. Place yourself. In Rome. You know. It's a. It's a big city. Just like St. Louis is. You might ask this question.

What does this letter. Have to say to me. You know. Living here. In 2021. I believe that. As the times get darker.

And darker. There will be fewer. And fewer. Churches. Here in North America. Grounded. In God's word. Do you agree with that? I believe that.

I believe the evidence. Is out there already. Friends. What a great time. To be a church. That focuses on the gospel. Amen. What a great time.

To have something. To offer to people. Something that we know. Is true. Something that we know. Is for our good. Something that is not.

[32 : 27] A lie. God can use us. If we're ready. Now. We don't know. If Paul ever made it to Spain. But he did get to Rome.

Probably. Not how he wanted. Because he ends up. Being taken there. As a prisoner. The good news of that. Is I guess Rome. Paid his way. But the bad news.

Is that. He's. He's. He's in. On. In house arrest. But even with that. We're going to see. That God still used him. And he had an impact.

On others. Listen to this. I'll close with this first. This is in Philippians. He's writing his. One of his prison letters. To the church at Philippi. And he says this.

He's in jail. He says. All the saints. In Caesar's household. Greet you. Yeah. Did you get the connection? He's meeting with the people.

[33 : 25] The people. In Caesar's household. And there's saints there. What a great path. That we have in store for us here. In God's word. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father. We thank you so much. For all that you have done for us. And that you continue to do. You've given us your holy word.

Lord. That we can read it. Know you more. And be refreshed. By the plans that you have for us. Because the plans you have. Are good Lord. Oh Lord. May we be a church. That cooperates with you. May we have a hunger. For your word.

May we walk the Roman road. So that others. Would see. That we have been initially sanctified. And that we also continuing. To be sanctified.

[34 : 20] That people would see. That we are different. Because of you. Let us have a joy Lord. That reflects. Just the.

The truths. That have happened to us. That. That we are eternally secure. In you. And no one. Nothing.

No power in heaven and earth. Can pluck us. From your hand. Lord. Use us. To your glory. And all of God's people said.

Amen. There a is. Born. No power. In power.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Happy technology. Amen. Amen. pm to me. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[35 : 14] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.