

Paul's letter to the **ROMANS** FROM AMONG ALL PEOPLES



Although Paul had never visited the churches in Rome, he'd had a long-standing desire to do so (Romans 1:13, 15:23). Even so, Paul does seem to have enjoyed a significant familiarity with them, as we see from the very long list of greetings he gives at the end of his letter (16:1-16).

Some key members in the Roman Church, such as Priscilla and Aquilla, had been key co-workers with Paul in proclaiming the Gospel among gentile peoples (16:3-5). The churches in Rome to whom Paul writes were a mix of gentile believers (both Greek and non-Greek) along with Jewish Christians as well. Paul hints that these believers of diverse background hadn't always enjoyed an easy unity with one another (15:7).

In fact, we know from the book of Acts (18:1-18) that the Roman church had endured a particularly turbulent beginning from the outset.

PAUL & ROMANS TIMELINE:

Early AD 30s

Jesus' Death & Resurrection

AD 33/34

Paul's Conversion

AD 49

Jews (including Christian Jews) are expelled from Rome by the emperor Claudius. Paul meets the expelled Roman Jewish-Christians Priscilla & Aquilla.

AD 54

Emperor Claudius dies.

Some time after this Priscilla & Aquilla return to Rome as the churches attempt to reintegrate the returning Jewish-Christians into their communities.

Approx. AD 57

Paul writes to the Roman Churches.

In the early years of the Roman church, the Emperor Claudius had issued an edict expelling all Jews from the City. Perhaps Claudius had heard of the unrest and disagreement caused among Jewish communities because of Jesus, and decided to simply expel all Jews rather than actually try and resolve the issues. In Acts 18:1-18 we see that Paul himself was caught up in some of these inter-church/synagogue tensions & disputes.

During the years that the Jewish believers were expelled from Rome, the now Gentile-only Christian church had continued to grow & develop without their Jewish-Christian siblings among them. The expulsion of Jews from Rome officially lasted a little over 5 years, though no doubt it took longer than that for many Jewish Romans to return home. Priscilla & Aquilla had themselves been among those Christian Jews initially expelled from their home and church in Rome (Acts 18:2).

Once the official expulsion had ended, Jewish & Gentile Christians were suddenly reunited as virtual strangers in the same church household; two very different groups, with very different cultures & backgrounds struggling to learn all over again where (and how!) each of them belonged in God's purposes and household.

Paul writes his letter to the Roman church with the unshakable conviction that the Gospel alone has the power to both save, and to strengthen Jews and Gentiles as co-heirs (God's children/sons) together with Jesus. Paul also alludes to those who might obstruct the unifying power of the gospel (16:17-19). He warns against those who insist that a deeper grasp of Jewish law should be the key to "belonging". In sharp contrast Paul bookends his letter by insisting that God's great promises have always been inherited not through obedience to the law, letter, or command, but rather through the "obedience of faith" (Romans 1:5 and 16:26).