



World Christian Fellowship

www.wcflondon.com
wcflondon@gmail.com

Appetite for the book of Romans

A life changing adventure.

I am convinced that people will be utterly transformed in mind and heart as we move through this very special journey in the book of Romans.

The reason is because that is what has happened in the past. If we just go back in history and see how the book of Romans affected people's lives.

The greatest reformations and revivals that we know about were results of the power of this book.

Augustine of Hippo:

In the summer of **A.D. 386** a man named **Augustine**, a native of North Africa, who had for two years been the professor of rhetoric at Milan, sat weeping in the garden of his friend **Alypius**.

He was almost persuaded to begin a new life and yet he found it impossible to break with his old life. As he sat, he heard a

child singing in a neighbouring yard, "*Tolle Lege, Tolle Lege,*" a little melody that says, "Take up and read, take up and read."

It struck him that perhaps that was something he should do and so he picked up a scroll which lay at his friend's side. That scroll contained a portion of the book of Romans.

Romans 13:13-14, *Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy.*¹⁴ *But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.*

"Instantly, at the end of this sentence a clear light flooded my heart and all the darkness of doubt vanished away."

In that very moment, from one sentence in the book of Romans, the church received the great Augustine, the framer of much of its theology.

Martin Luther:

In **November 1515** there was a priest by the name of Martin Luther, who himself was known as an Augustinian monk, who was the professor of sacred theology in the Catholic university of Wittenberg.

To his students he began to expound the epistle to the Romans. From November of 1515 to the following September

of 1516, he daily spent himself in the understanding of that epistle.

As he daily prepared his lectures, he became more and more appreciative of the centrality of the Pauline doctrine of justification by faith.

Luther struggled with the biblical phrase “the righteousness of God.”

He wrote, “Nevertheless, in spite of the ardor of my heart I was hindered by the unique word in the first chapter (of Romans): ‘the righteousness of God is revealed in it.’

I hated the word ‘righteousness of God,’ because in accordance with the usage and custom of the doctors I had been taught to understand it philosophically as meaning, as they put it, the formal or active righteousness according to which God is righteous and punishes sinners and the unjust.

As a monk I led an irreproachable life. Nevertheless, I felt that I was a sinner before God. My conscience was restless, and I could not depend on God being propitiated by my satisfactions.

Not only did I not love, but I actually hated the righteous God who punishes sinners. Thus a furious battle raged within my perplexed conscience, but meanwhile I was knocking at the door of this particular Pauline passage, earnestly seeking to

know the mind of the great apostle. Day and night I tried to meditate upon the significance of these words: 'The righteousness of God is revealed in it, as it is written: The righteous shall live by faith.'"

Luther said, "Romans is the chief part of the New Testament and the perfect gospel."

And need I say what contribution Martin Luther made?

John Wesley:

In the evening of **May 24, 1738**. There was a man by the name of John Wesley. His biographer says that he went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street where a man was reading Luther's Preface to the Epistle to the Romans.

He wrote in his journal, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, "I myself felt my heart strangely warmed."

"I felt I did trust in Christ and Christ alone for my salvation, and an assurance was given me that He had taken my sins away, even mine and saved me from the law of sin and death."

It was in Aldersgate Street at the reading of the book of Romans that John Wesley was redeemed. And we all know the contribution he made.

John Calvin:

Calvin was writing a commentary on Romans in his 20s when he began to realize that what the Catholic Church in France was teaching in the 1500s did not match up with what he was reading. Calvin credits Romans as instrumental in his conversion to Christ.

He wrote, "The book of Romans was my entrance to all the most hidden treasures of Scripture. The subject then of these chapters may be stated thus - man's only righteousness is through the mercy of God in Christ, which being offered by the gospel, is apprehended by faith."

Romans changes people's lives because it clearly communicates, as Calvin described, "the mercy of God in Christ."

"If a man understands it, he has a sure road open to him to the understanding of the whole of Scripture."

Fredric Louis Godet:

The brilliant commentator Godet, Swiss, (1812-1900) called Romans the cathedral of the Christian faith.

Godet says, "O St. Paul, had thy one work been to compose an epistle to the Romans that alone should have rendered thee dear to every sound mind.

William Newell (1868–1956)

The great itinerant Bible teacher, wrote, “I have taught Romans more than eighty times and the pastures are still green.”

Samuel Taylor Coleridge: (1772-1808)

Coleridge English poet and William Wordsworth friend and theologian said "It is the most profound work in existence."

Dr. John Cairns of Scotland

"The gospel tide nowhere forms so many deep dark pools where the neophyte may drown as in the book of Romans.

C. H. Dodd (1884–1973)

Wrote that Romans is “the first great work of Christian theology. I would go even farther. It is not only the first, but also the greatest work of Christian theology. No one in 2,000 years has written anything to match it.”

William Tyndale (1494-1536)

In the history of the church there was a very important man by the name of William Tyndale who also wrote regarding the epistle to the Romans.

In the Prologue to the Epistle to the Romans, which he wrote for his 1534 edition of the English New Testament.

"I think it meet that every Christian man not only know Romans by rote and without the book but also exercise himself therein ever more continually as with the daily bread of the soul."

The principle and most excellent part of the New Testament and most pure gospel the more it is studied, the easier it is; the more it is chewed, the pleasanter it is.

Now you can go through history far beyond what we saw, and you will find transformation after transformation in individual lives, in nations and across the world that came when men discovered the realities of the book of Romans.

It is deep, it is profound, it is divine and yet it is within the grasp of all of us.

Dr. Barnhouse had a great thought on Romans and he wrote four or five volumes on it.

"A scientist may say that mother's milk is the most perfect food known to man. And the scientist may give you an analysis showing all the chemical components. He may give you a list of all the vitamins in the milk and an estimate of the calories in a given quantity. But a baby will take that milk without the remotest knowledge of its content and will grow day by day."

So, it is with the profoundest truths of the Word of God.

Some of us may be able to analyze it, some of us may not, but all of us do well to drink and to grow.

Sanday and Burton are the two great scholars applied two adjectives to Romans.

Sanday, who wrote perhaps the most definitive commentary ever written in the English language on the book of Romans.

Sanday said that the book of Romans is testamentary. He meant by that that it is Paul's last will and testament. In it he distils the essence of the last word on the Christian faith. It is the last will and testament of Paul. It says all that he intends to sum up and say about the gospel.

Burton, another brilliant commentator said, "It is prophylactic," and prophylactic means something that guards against infection.

He said that the epistle to the Romans is the prophylactic for the church, it ever and always is that which saves the church from heresy, it is the guardian of the church.

Romans quotes the Old Testament more than any other New Testament book, 57 times.

The most common words in Romans are as follows.

- “God,” 153 times,
- “law,” 72 times,
- “Christ,” 65 times,
- “sin,” 48 times
- “Lord,” 43 times and
- “faith,” 40 times.

It is about God, the law, Christ, sin, the Lord, faith and all the ramifications of those terms.

This letter to Romans answers all the important questions!

What is the good news of God?

Is Jesus really God?

What proves He is God?

Why did He come?

What is a saint?

What is God like?

How can God send people to hell?

What will happen to people who have never heard the gospel?

Why do men reject God and Christ?

Why are there false religions and idols?

What is man's biggest sin?

Why is there sex perversion, hate, crime and those other things and why are they so rampant?

What is the standard by which God condemns people?

How can a person who has never heard be held responsible?

Are Jews more responsible to believe than Gentiles?

Who is a true Jew?
Is it any advantage to be Jewish?
How good is man?
How bad is man?
Can anyone keep God's law?
How do we know we are sinners?
How are we justified and forgiven?
How is a Christian related to Abraham?
What is the importance of Christ's death?
What is the importance of His resurrection?
What is the importance of His present life?
For whom did Christ die?
Where can men find real peace and hope?
How are we related spiritually to Adam and how are we related spiritually to Christ?
What is grace? And what does it do?
How does a person die spiritually to be reborn?
What is the Christian's relation to sin?
How important is obedience?
How are law and grace related to one another?
Why is it such a struggle to live the Christian life?
How many natures does a believer have?
What does the Holy Spirit do for us?
How intimate is a Christian's relationship to God really?
Why is there suffering?
Will the world ever be any different?
How can I pray properly?
What does predestination mean?

How secure is a Christian?
What is God's present plan for Israel?
What is His future plan for Israel?
Why have the Gentiles been chosen?
What is our responsibility to Israel?
How is a person saved?
What is the basic bottom line for Christian commitment?
What is the Christian's relationship to the world, to other Christians, to the unsaved, to the government?
What is love and how does it work?
How do we deal with neutral things, things that are neither right nor wrong?
What is true freedom?
How important is unity in the church?

Those are a few of the questions the book answers.

This letter will captivate the mind of a consummate genius and yet will bring tears to the humblest soul and refreshment to the simplest reason.

The book will knock you down and then lift you up. It will strip you naked and then clothe you with eternal elegance.

Romans speaks to today.

It speaks to the issues we face today morally.

It speaks about adultery.

It speaks about homosexuality.

It speaks about perversion.

It speaks about killing and hating and lying and civil disobedience.

It speaks to us intellectually.

It speaks to us socially.

It speaks to us psychologically.

It tells us where true freedom comes to deliver men from guilt. It speaks to us spiritually for it answers our despair with a hope in the future. It speaks to us internationally for it tells us the ultimate destiny of the earth and specially the plan for the nation Israel.

It speaks to us nationally, for it tells us our responsibility to the government.

It speaks to us supernaturally, for it defines for us the infinite power of God.

It speaks to us theologically because it teaches us relationships between flesh and spirit, law, and grace. But most of all, it brings God to us profoundly.

I think that the Epistle to the Romans is the most profound work in existence!

John Knox (not the Scot) said that it is “unquestionably the most important theological work ever written”

G. K. Chesterton (1874–1936),

The well-known Christian writer and apologist, was once asked: “What one book would you most want along if you were stranded on a deserted island?”

He responded, “Thomas’s Guide to Practical Shipbuilding!”

If asked the same question about a single book of the Bible, many Christians would choose Romans.

Romans covers the Christian life and theology like no other biblical book.