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# BOOK OVERVIEW

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## Romans

**Author:** the Apostle Paul

**Date:** about 57-58 A.D.

**Recipients:** Christians in Rome

**Summary:** The book presents the foundational doctrines of the Church. It is sometimes called the “Constitution of the Gospel.”

**Key verses:** Romans 1:16-17

**Key words:** justify (justification) (17), faith (37); Christ (39)

**Notes:**

No one knows who established the church in Rome. It consisted predominately of Gentile believers, but it also included Jewish converts.

This book contains what is often called “The Roman’s Road,” a classic soul-winning sequence of verses that leads to salvation:

- Romans 3:23; 3:10-18 “all are sinners”
- Romans 6:23 “sin brings death”
- Romans 5:8 “God provides a solution”
- Romans 10:9 “salvation received by faith”
- Romans 5:1 “salvation brings peace”
- Romans 8:1 “the saved are not condemned”
- Romans 8:38-39 “salvation is secure”

It is believed that Paul wrote this letter in Corinth and it was taken to Rome by Phoebe. (16:1-2)

Chapter 8 refers to the Holy Spirit nineteen times.

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**Author:** the Apostle Paul

**Date:** 56-57 A.D.

**Recipients:** The church at Corinth. Paul assumed the letter would circulate in the area around Corinth. (I Corinthians 1:1)

**Summary:** Paul seeks to correct the inappropriate behavior of the Believers in the church at Corinth.

**Key verses:** I Corinthians 14:33, 40

**Key words:** spirit/Spirit (35), wise/wisdom (30), tongue/tongues (22), spiritual (16)

**Notes:**

Paul first entered Corinth, where he stayed for a year and a half, during his second missionary journey (Acts 18:1).

This letter was probably written in Ephesus while Paul was on his third missionary journey. (I Corinthians 16:8)

Paul had written an earlier letter to the Corinthians and they had written to him. (I Corinthians 5:9, 7:1)

Corinth, an important Greek city, had a population of 600-700 thousand people. A major attraction was its temple to Aphrodite, the goddess of beauty, which was served by several hundred women prostitutes.

Paul gives the Corinthians explicit instructions as to how to celebrate The Lord's Supper. (I Corinthians 11: 20-30)

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## II Corinthians

**Author:** the Apostle Paul

**Date:** A.D. 56-57 (shortly after the writing of I Corinthians)

**Recipients:** The believers at Corinth, to be shared in Achaia (southern Greece).

**Summary:** In addition to expanding upon the instructions he gave in his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul defends his Apostleship and the ministry to which God had called him.

**Key verses:** II Corinthians 4:5, 5:20–21

**Key words:** ministry (in various forms) (18 times)

**Notes:**

This is one of the most personal of all of Paul's letters.

Paul wrote this letter from somewhere in Macedonia during his third missionary journey.

Paul places special emphasis upon the Corinthian believers not being "unequally yoked with unbelievers." (II Corinthians 6:14-7:1)

In chapters eight and nine Paul encourages the Corinthians to be generous in their giving "not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver."

In II Corinthians 4:7 Paul compares the glory of the Gospel contained in our earthly bodies to a practice in his day; people hid valuable items in plain, unattractive clay jars.

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## Galatians

**Author:** the Apostle Paul

**Date:** A.D. 55-56

**Recipients:** Various groups of Believers in the Roman province of Galatia

**Summary:** Paul makes a clear defense of the truth that “*the just shall live by faith*” and not by works. (Galatians 3:10) As a result, this book is sometimes referred to as the ***Magna Carta of the Church***.

**Key verses:** Galatians 5:1

**Key words:** law (32 times), faith (21 times)

**Notes:**

Paul addresses the problem of Judaizers, those who expected Believers to live by the Mosaic law **in addition to** their life of faith in Jesus Christ, a view which is held by some religious sects even today.

Galatia, in Asia Minor, included Antioch of Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe, cities Paul visited during his first missionary journey. (Acts 13:14–14:21)

The Galatian people were originally Gauls who had migrated from western Europe.

The Greek word for “mark” referred to a brand that was used to indicate ownership of slaves or animals. (Galatians 6:17)

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## Ephesians

**Author:** the Apostle Paul

**Date:** A.D. 62 (while Paul was a prisoner in Rome)

**Recipients:** the Believers in Ephesus

**Summary:** The daily walk and heavenly position of the members of the Body of Christ

**Key verses:** Ephesians 1:3, 4:1, 13

**Key words:** in (indicative of our position, "in Christ," "in the heavenlies") (93 times), grace (12 times)

**Notes:**

Ephesus was the chief city in the Roman province of Asia (now Asia Minor).

Paul spent about three years establishing the church in Ephesus. (Acts 20:31) The church there was also built through the ministries of Timothy, Aquila, Priscilla, and Apollos. Tradition indicates that the Apostle John ministered there in the latter years of his life.

Ephesus was at the center of the trade routes that attracted people from all over the known world.

By the first century Ephesus was a dying city, as its harbor was filling with silt. Commerce based on the cult of the Greek goddess Artemis, Diana of the Romans, was what sustained it.

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## Philippians

**Author:** the Apostle Paul

**Date:** A.D. 63-64 (probably while Paul was a prisoner in Rome)

**Recipients:** “all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi” (Philippians 1:1)

**Summary:** Paul thanks the Believers for their faithful support and encourages them to continue emulating Christ.

**Key verses:** Philippians 4:4

**Key words:** joy (rejoice) (18 times)

**Notes:**

Paul visited Philippi for the first time on his second missionary journey, about A.D. 51.

Philippi, an ancient city of Macedonia, was renamed after Philip of Macedon, the father of Alexander the Great, who annexed it in 356 B.C. It later became a Roman colony. Philippi means “pertaining to Philip.” Its people were proud of their Roman citizenship. (see Acts 16:20-21)

Unlike many of the epistles, the book addresses no particular doctrinal error among the Believers in Philippi.

Paul sent this letter from Rome to Philippi, about 700 miles, by Epaphroditus, who had been sent by the Philippians to help Paul. (see Philippians 2:25–30)

Philippi was the first European city to receive the Gospel. (see Acts 16:9-15)

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## Colossians

**Author:** the Apostle Paul

**Date:** A.D. 62 (probably while Paul was a prisoner in Rome)

**Recipients:** “the saints and faithful brethren in Christ Jesus which are at Colosse” (Colossians 1:2)

**Summary:** the supremacy of Jesus Christ

**Key verses:** Colossians 1:18; 2:10

**Key words:** head (3 times)

**Notes:**

There is no record in the book of Acts of Paul visiting Colosse. Apparently, the church was started by Paul’s fellowworker Epaphras, probably while Paul was in Ephesus on his third missionary journey.

This was the hometown of Philemon. Colossians 4:9 tells of Onesimus, his run-away slave, who Paul is returning to him.

Colosse was a large city on the Lycus River in Phrygia, an area in what we now call Asia Minor. It was located about 100 miles east of Ephesus and about 11 miles east of Laodicea.

In this letter Paul confronts errors that were creeping into the church in the area around Colosse (taboos about food, confusion about holy days, devotion to angelic beings, and early Gnostic heresies) by proclaiming the supremacy of Christ.

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## I Thessalonians

**Author:** the Apostle Paul

**Date:** A.D. 52

**Recipients:** “the church of the Thessalonians” (I Thessalonians 1:1)

**Summary:** the second coming of Christ

**Key verses:** I Thessalonians 1:9–10

**Key words:** coming (of Christ, 4 times), comfort (6 times)

**Notes:**

When Paul writes of “we,” he is undoubtedly referring to Silas and Timothy, who are with him. (1:2, 5, 8, 9; 2:2)

From Athens Paul had sent Timothy to see how the church at Thessalonica was doing. Paul was in Corinth by the time Timothy returned and this letter is written in response to Timothy’s report. (3:1-2)

The church in Thessalonica was established during Paul’s second missionary journey. Paul spent only about three weeks in the city. (Acts 17:1-10)

This epistle is one of the earliest writings of Paul that we have today.

Apparently many in the church were confused about the return of Christ. Some were concerned that loved ones who had died would miss Christ’s return and others had stopped working and were idly waiting for Christ’s return.

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## II Thessalonians

**Author:** the Apostle Paul

**Date:** A.D. 52

**Recipients:** “the church of the Thessalonians” (II Thessalonians 1:1)

**Summary:** the day of the Lord

**Key verses:** II Thessalonians 1:7b–10

**Notes:**

This letter was probably written in response to the report that Paul received from the Thessalonians after they received his first letter.

Apparently, Paul’s first letter did not clear up the matter of Christ’s return; so he gives further instruction concerning the subject.

Paul encourages the Believers by assuring them that God will render justice upon those who are persecuting them.

Apparently Paul dictated some of his letters; but, as is noted in II Thessalonians 3:17, sometimes he concluded the letter with a note in his own handwriting.

Until the New Testament was completed, the teachings of Christianity were passed on by word of mouth, the “traditions” mentioned in II Thessalonians 2:15.

Paul uses his own example of working rather than being idle and living off of the work of others. (II Thessalonians 3:6-10, see also Acts 18:2-3)

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Paul encourages the Believers by assuring them that God will render justice upon those who are persecuting them.

Apparently Paul dictated some of his letters; but, as is noted in II Thessalonians 3:17, sometimes he concluded the letter with a note in his own handwriting.

Until the New Testament was completed, the teachings of Christianity were passed on by word of mouth, the “traditions” mentioned in II Thessalonians 2:15.

Paul uses his own example of working rather than being idle and living off of the work of others. (II Thessalonians 3:6-10, see also Acts 18:2-3)

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# BOOK OVERVIEW

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## I Timothy

**Author:** the Apostle Paul

**Date:** A.D. 64-5 (probably sometime between Paul's two imprisonments in Rome)

**Recipient:** Timothy, "my own son in the faith" (I Timothy 1:2)

**Summary:** guidance for a young man to help him properly lead the church

**Key verse:** I Timothy 3:15

**Key words:** doctrine (8 times), godliness (8 times), teach/teacher (7 times)

**Notes:**

Paul met Timothy in Lystra during his first missionary journey. Under Paul's ministry Timothy became a Christian and was a devoted disciple of Paul throughout his life. Paul thought of him as his "son."

Timothy had a Greek father and a devout Jewish mother and grandmother.

This is the first of three letters that are commonly referred to as the "pastoral epistles," I & II Timothy and Titus.

Timothy was in Ephesus, when he received this letter.

This book gives the clearest instructions as to the character and qualifications of those who would be leaders in the church.

Paul admonishes Timothy to focus upon "sound doctrine" rather than the "old wives' fables" espoused by false teachers.

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# BOOK OVERVIEW

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## II Timothy

**Author:** the Apostle Paul

**Date:** A.D. 67 (probably during Paul's final imprisonment in Rome)

**Recipient:** Timothy, "my dearly beloved son" (II Timothy 1:2)

**Summary:** the true minister of Jesus Christ, the servant of the Lord

**Key verses:** II Timothy 4:1-5

**Key words:** good (5 times)

**Notes:**

Knowing that his life may be short, Paul uses this letter to ask Timothy to join him in Rome. (II Timothy 4:9, 11, 13, 21)

In Timothy's day, the "scriptures" were what we have as the Old Testament. They did not include those writings which are referred to as the Apocrypha. Although God was revealing new truth to Christians at that time, what we have as the New Testament, we should be reminded of how important the Old Testament has been and is to Christianity. It was the Old Testament that Jesus used to reveal Himself as the Messiah.

Even while Paul was alive, he was aware that the churches that he founded and disciplined would be infiltrated with doctrinal error. His concern is confirmed in the letters to the seven churches in the book of Revelation.

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## Titus

**Author:** the Apostle Paul

**Date:** A.D. 64-65

**Recipient:** “Titus, mine own son after the common faith” (Titus 1:4)

**Summary:** the consistent godly life that should be true of the Believer

**Key verses:** Titus 2:11-14

**Key words:** good (11 times), good works (5 times), sound (5 times)

**Notes:**

Titus was Greek by birth. (Galatians 2:3) He is not mentioned in the book of Acts, but he was apparently led to the Lord by Paul. He was a faithful co-worker with Paul who sent him on various missions to serve the churches that Paul had established.

Titus went with Paul and Barnabus to the council in Jerusalem, (Acts 15:1-35, Galatians 2:1)

Titus is known for his service to the church on the island of Crete (Titus 1:5), where it is assumed he died.

Paul used Titus to show that a Gentile did not have to follow the Jewish law to become a complete Christian. (Galatians 2:1-5) That is why Titus 3:5 is so important.

Paul gives clear instructions to Titus as to the kinds of leaders that the church should have. (Titus 1:5-9)

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## Philemon

**Author:** the Apostle Paul

**Date:** A.D. 64-65

**Recipient:** Philemon (Philemon 1:1)

**Summary:** the reconciliation of a runaway slave with his Christian master

**Key verses:** Philemon 17-19

**Notes:**

Paul's salutation is also addressed to Apphia, the wife of Philemon, and their son Archippus.

It appears that Philemon was a leader in the church at Colosse and had come to know the Lord through the ministry of Paul.

Apparently, Onesimus not only ran away from his master, but he also stole from him. While Onesimus was in Rome he came under the ministry of the Apostle Paul and became a Christian. The life of Onesimus was so changed that Paul wanted to keep him in Rome, but he felt obligated to return him to his master.

Paul asks Philemon to receive Onesimus with forgiveness and promised to repay Philemon whatever Onesimus had stolen.

Onesimus means "profitable."

Tradition says that Philemon and his family were stoned to death during Nero's persecution.

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## Hebrews

**Author:** uncertain (possibly the Apostle Paul)

**Date:** A.D. 63-68

**Recipients:** A group of Jewish Christians that the writer knew (location unknown)

**Summary:** the supremacy of Jesus Christ as our High Priest

**Key verses:** Hebrews 4:14-15

**Key words:** perfection (11 times), eternal/forever (13 times), Heaven (16 times), better (12 times), faith (31 times)

**Notes:**

The writer shows how Jesus Christ is superior to the prophets (Hebrews 1:1-2) and the angels. (Hebrews 1:3–14)

Although revering Moses, the writer demonstrates how Christ is superior to Moses. (Hebrews 3:1–6)

Hebrews 11–12:2, “the role call of the faithful,” lists several of those who are among the “cloud of witnesses” whose legacy we carry on.

This book was written to Jewish Christians who were prone to revert to Judaism.

The author reassures his readers that Christ’s work is not only superior, but it is also complete, finished, “once for all.” (Hebrews 10:10)

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## James

**Author:** James (“the Lord’s brother”—Galatians 1:19—half-brother of Jesus)

**Date:** A.D. 45

**Recipients:** “the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad” (James 1:1)

**Summary:** one’s faith is demonstrated by a life of obedience to Christ

**Key verse:** James 2:20

**Key words:** faith (16 times), works (15 times)

**Notes:**

This James was **not** the son of Zebedee, one of Jesus’ disciples, the one who may have been a cousin to Jesus.

At first, James, along with the rest of his family, did not believe in their half-brother Jesus (John 7:5); but, after Jesus’ resurrection, James became a believer. Eventually he was the primarily leader in the church at Jerusalem. (Acts 15)

This may have been the first epistle written to Christians.

The message of James is that while we are justified before God by our faith, we are justified before men by our works.

James indicates that the singing of psalms was common among Christians. (James 5:13)

According to Josephus, James was put to death by the High Priest.

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## I Peter

**Author:** the Apostle Peter

**Date:** A.D. 63

**Recipients:** Jewish Christians in Asia Minor (I Peter 1:1)

**Summary:** encouragement to live the Christian life even in trials and persecution

**Key verses:** I Peter 4:12-13

**Key words:** suffer/suffering (15 times), glory/glorify (16 times)

**Notes:**

Peter was a nickname, from the Greek word “*petros*,” for Simon. He was also called Cephas, the Aramaic word for rock. He was a fisherman by trade. He was introduced to Jesus by his brother Andrew. (John 1:40-42)

Peter had a wife and she travelled with him. (Mark 1:30, I Corinthians 9:5)

Even though only two short letters from the Apostle Peter are included in the New Testament, many Bible scholars believe that much of the information that Mark included in his Gospel was received from Peter. It is believe that Mark travelled with Peter and served as his secretary.

In Peter’s day women would weave gold threads and spangles in their hair so they would sparkle and jingle when they moved their heads. (I Peter 3:3)

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## II Peter

**Author:** the Apostle Peter

**Date:** A.D. 66

**Recipients:** Jewish Christians in Asia Minor, as was I Peter (II Peter 3:1)

**Summary:** encouragement to live for Christ in spite of scoffers and false teachers

**Key verse:** II Peter 2:1

**Key words:** know/knowledge (9 times), judgment (4 times)

**Notes:**

This epistle was written shortly before Peter's death. Although the Bible does not record his death, tradition indicates that he was executed during the reign of Nero. There is some archaeological evidence to suggest that Peter became a martyr in Rome.

Although there is no Biblical or historical evidence that Peter was the key leader in the church at Rome, apparently he lived there for a while.

Peter concludes his letter by reminding its readers that knowledge should lead to spiritual growth. (II Peter 3:18)

Peter offers a clear defense of the Divine inspiration of Scripture in II Peter 1:19-21. In II Peter 3:16 he speaks of Paul's writing as being on the same level as the Old Testament scriptures.

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## I John

**Author:** the Apostle John

**Date:** A.D. 90

**Recipients:** “you that believe on the name of the Son of God” (I John 5:13)

**Summary:** assurance to those who believe in Christ that they have eternal life, and instruction as to how to live accordingly

**Key verses:** I John 5:12-13

**Key words:** know (35 times), world (23 times), love (21 times), light (6 times)

**Notes:**

John was the son of Zebedee and the brother of James. (Matthew 4:21)

John was the only disciple that followed Jesus from His betrayal in the garden to his crucifixion on Calvary.

I John 4:2–3 refutes a belief that was held by the Gnostics of John’s day. They believed that “Christ” was only a spirit that came upon Jesus at His baptism and left Him at the crucifixion. Thus, they believed that it was Jesus only, not Christ, who died on the cross. Others believed that Jesus was only a spirit.

The Gnostics also believed that the God of creation was an inferior god, because they believed that the material world was inferior. The Gnostics claimed to have secret knowledge about God.

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## II & III John

**Author:** the Apostle John

**Date:** A.D. 90

**Recipients:** II John = “the elect lady and her children” (II John 11), III John = “Gaius” (III John 1)

**Summary:** II John = warning against deceivers; III John = admonition to accept true believers

**Key verses:** II John 9, 10; III John 8

**Key words:** II John = truth (5 times), III John = true/truth (7 times)

**Notes:**

It is uncertain as to whether the “lady and her children” refers to a particular woman and her family, a particular woman and the Christians meeting in her home, or to a particular Church and its members.

Apparently, this Gaius is not related to any other Gaius mentioned in the Bible, but he became a Christian under the ministry of the Apostle John.

II John warns against having fellowship with those who are unbelievers; on the other hand, III John warns those who refuse to have fellowship with true believers.

The hospitality of Christians was especially important to traveling teachers and evangelists, since public housing was not always available.

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## II & III John

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# BOOK OVERVIEW

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## Jude

**Author:** Judas (Jude)

**Date:** A.D. 66-68

**Recipients:** “them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ” (Jude 1)

**Summary:** apostasy past, present, and future

**Key verse:** Jude 3

**Key word:** ungodly (6 times)

**Notes:**

Jude is the English form of the name Judas and the Hebrew name Judah. He was **not** one of the twelve Apostles.

Jude makes the only mention in Scripture of the contention between the archangel Michael and the devil over the body of Moses. (vs 9)

Jude is the only Biblical writer that mentions the prophecy of Enoch. (vs 14-16)

Jude had originally intended to write about the “common salvation;” instead, he was prompted by God to write concerning the apostasy that was creeping into the church. (vs 3-4)

Even though Jude and his brother James were half brothers of Jesus in the flesh, they referred to themselves as nothing more than His servants. (vs 1)  
Neither one believed in Christ until after the resurrection. (John 7:5, Acts 1:14)

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