



INTRODUCTION

You may not know this, but I was a movie star as a kid. I played all kinds of characters. I saved friends from danger, defeated the villains, and was always the hero.

You probably haven't seen any of my movies because they were made on my brother's video camera in our backyard. Okay, so maybe "movie star" isn't the right word. But I loved being the superhero with superpowers who fought the bad guys!

The book of Romans is about a hero. But not just any hero—the greatest superhero of all time! He's the hero who rescues people from slavery, defeats the devil, and even brings dead people back to life! He's the hero who came to save the us—the bad guys who so often sin and run away from God.

Wait a minute! The bad guys?

I know, it sounds crazy! Isn't the hero supposed to fight the bad guys? What kind of story is this!?

But what if I told you that you're one of the bad guys?

*That's right.
You're the bad guy,
and so am I!*

But instead of fighting against us, the greatest hero fights for us. He changes us from bad guys to good guys, from enemies to family.

If we really are the bad guys, then that's good news! And that's what this book is all about: the good news of the greatest hero, Jesus Christ.

The book of Romans is a letter written to the church in Rome. In other words, all the people in Rome who had trusted in Jesus to save them. The man who wrote the letter was named Paul, and he was one of the biggest enemies of them all!

Before Paul became a Christian, he put people in jail for believing in Jesus. But Jesus changed Paul's heart and helped him believe the good news that He died to save us from our sins. Paul's life totally changed! Jesus then told him to tell the good news to everyone, everywhere!

In this letter to the Romans, Paul will explain the good news, which is called the gospel. Paul had never been to Rome, but he still loved and cared about helping the Christians who lived there. Why? Because when Jesus saves us, we are all part of the same family. Paul will tell us why we're bad guys and how Jesus changes us in an instant, making us God's children instead. He will show us how being saved by Jesus transforms everything we do.

Paul wrote this letter about 2,000 years ago, but the gospel is still true for us today! So let's turn the page and learn about the hero who brings not just good news, but the greatest news...



Paul's Third Missionary Journey: AD 53-58
(Acts 18:22-21:17)



GOOD NEWS!

Romans 1:1-15

A long time ago—way before there were emails, text messages, or phone calls—people wrote letters. Instead of just being written to one person, these letters often were written to entire groups of people. Everyone in town gathered to listen as someone read it aloud. Back then, the very first thing a letter said was who wrote it, and that’s exactly how the letter to the Romans begins:

From Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to speak for Jesus and specially chosen to tell people about God’s good news.

Usually the next part tells who the letter is written to, but Paul was so excited about the gospel, which means “good news,” that he just had to talk about it right away!

God promised this gospel a long time ago. In the Old Testament, God promised to send His Son to the world. God's Son became a real human baby from the family of David, but He is also the true Son of God. The fact that He died and came back to life proves it! His name is Jesus Christ, and He's our Lord!

He made some of us apostles, His spokespeople, and gave us the grace we need to bring people to Him.

When people have faith in Jesus, they obey Him.
When they obey Him, that helps others
all over the world know and love His name.
And that includes you, whom Jesus called to be His own!

The rest of this letter talks a lot about the gospel, but, from the start, Paul wants to make sure that we know who the good news is all about—Jesus!

The amazing thing about Jesus is that He is truly and fully human. But He's also really and fully God!

Jesus became a real man with skin, bones, and muscles, just like us! He was born as a baby, and his great, great, great (and a lot more “greats”) grandfather was a man named King David. About a thousand years earlier, God promised David that one of his grandkids would become the perfect king that God's people wanted so badly. That righteous king would rule forever. Paul wants us to know that Jesus is the promised King!

Jesus is also God! That's why Paul calls Him “our Lord,” which is what people in the Old Testament called God. Calling Jesus “Lord” was also a huge deal because the Romans called their ruler, Caesar, “lord.” So Paul is saying Caesar is not in charge. Jesus is! Now that was a BIG deal and a BIG problem for the Romans.



Jesus is the Son of God, and He came to the world and lived a perfect life without ever doing anything wrong. Yet, even though He never sinned, He was punished with death for our sins. He died on a cross to take the penalty we deserve. But the incredible thing is He didn't stay dead! He was dead for three days (that's really dead), but then He rose back to life! So that proved, without a doubt, that He was God because He had the power of God.

Paul and the other apostles told people the good news and wrote letters like this one, and they did it so that people like you and me would have faith in Jesus. When we hear the good news that Jesus died for our sins, believe it, and trust in Jesus, our faith saves us from our own death sentence. And when we have faith, God changes us so that we can obey Him.

Obedying God brings Him glory, and that's what life is all about. And so, just like Paul belongs to Jesus as His servant, Jesus has called people like you and me to belong to Him.

Now Paul finally gets to the next part of the letter, where he tells whom he's writing to and gives a friendly greeting:

To all who live in Rome, who God loves,
and who have been called to be holy like Him:
May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ
give you grace and peace.

Next, Paul shares why he's thankful for the church in Rome.

I am grateful to God because the whole world is talking about your faith. I pray for you all the time and ask God to let me come and meet you so that we can all be encouraged. Our faith grows and strengthens when we see the faith of friends who know and love Jesus.

Kaleidoscope Corner

Jews and Gentiles

Paul talks a lot about Jews and Gentiles in his letter to the Romans. So who are they?

Thousands of years ago, God came to a man named Abraham, promising to give him more children than he could ever count. Those children and all of their children and their children's children (and on, and on, and on) would become a huge nation. They were God's chosen people, known as "Israel." Everyone who was a part of that family was called a Jew.

Gentiles are everybody else. If you're not a Jew, you are a Gentile! Some Jews thought Gentiles couldn't be saved because they weren't from the right family, but they were wrong. Jesus came to bring people from every nation of the world into His family.

Jesus gave Paul a very important job. He was in charge of telling the good news of Jesus to the Gentiles. So Paul journeyed all over the world to preach the good news.