

Title: Romans Introduction and Romans 1:1

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Session 2

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Abstract

This lecture by Dr. Craig Keener provides an introduction to the Book of Romans and a detailed analysis of Romans 1:1, focusing on the central theme of ethnic reconciliation between Jewish and Gentile believers. Dr. Keener outlines the historical and cultural tensions in the Roman house churches following the return of Jewish believers after their expulsion by Emperor Claudius. He explores the multi-faceted identity of the Apostle Paul, arguing for the validity of Paul's Roman citizenship as a descendant of freedpersons and examining his self-description as a servant, a called apostle, and one set apart for the gospel. Ultimately, the lecture highlights how Paul's theological framework of universal human lostness and equal salvation in Christ serves to dismantle claims of ethnic superiority and foster communal unity.

Outline

I. Introduction to the Lecture and Overview of Romans' Theme

- **A.** Session Title: Romans Introduction and Romans 1:1
- **B.** Theme: Jewish-Gentile tension and ethnic reconciliation (climaxes in Rom 15:5)
- **C.** Historical trace of factions in Acts 28:15
 - **1.** Pro-law Jewish followers of Jesus versus Gentile followers with certain proclivities
 - **2.** Realization of the Jewish-Gentile tension recognized since the origin of the letter

II. Theological Survey of Romans (Chapters 1–15)

- **A.** Universal Lostness of Humanity (Chapters 1–3)
 - **1.** Gentiles are lost / damned (Rom 1:18–32)

- **2.** Jewish people are lost / damned (Rom 2)
- **3.** Universality of human sin: everyone is lost (Rom 3)
- **B. Equal Salvation and Spiritual Descent (Chapters 4–8)**
 - **1.** Abraham as the father of faith, not physical descent or circumcision (Rom 4)
 - **2.** Adam vs. Christ: universal human descent and spiritual renewal (Rom 5:12–21)
 - **3.** Putting off the old person in Adam (Rom 6)
 - **4.** The Law's inability to transform or overcome sin (Rom 7)
 - **5.** New Exodus, adoption, and redemption in Christ (Rom 8)
- **C. Divine Sovereignty and Chosenness: The Heart of the Argument (Chapters 9–11)**
 - **1.** Divine choice of Isaac and Jacob based on promise, not physical descent (Rom 9)
 - **2.** Sovereignty of God to choose on any basis, not ethnicity (Rom 9)
 - **3.** Universality of salvation for "everyone" who calls on the Lord (Rom 10)
 - **4.** Challenging Gentile pride: the remnant of Israel and grafting into the olive tree (Rom 11)
- **D. Practical Application and Community Reconciliation (Chapters 12–15)**
 - **1.** One body with different spiritual gifts (Rom 12)
 - **2.** Submission to Roman authorities and the law of love (Rom 13)
 - **3.** Addressing cultural differences: food customs and holy days (Rom 14)
 - **4.** Christ as a minister to both Jews and Gentiles (Rom 15)
- **E. Distinction Between Theme and Occasion of Romans**
 - **1.** Theme: Jesus is the only way of salvation
 - **2.** Reason/Occasion: Addressing Jewish-Gentile division in the church
 - **3.** Relevance for preaching today: crossing cultural boundaries to welcome one another

III. Historical Background: The Clash of Cultures

- **A.** The expulsion of Jewish Christians from Rome by Emperor Claudius
- **B.** Returning Jewish believers clash with Gentile-dominated house churches
 - **1.** Culturally-conspicuous boundary markers: food laws (pork) and holy days
 - **2.** Integration of returning believers into established Gentile customs

IV. Excursus on Pauline Theology and Debates

- **A.** Key universal issues in Pauline theology
 - **1.** Sin, flesh, justification (forensic), and reconciliation (relational)
 - **2.** Dependence on Christ and the Holy Spirit rather than self-ability
- **B.** Scholarship debates
 - **1.** James D.G. Dunn's focus on boundary markers (circumcision, food, days)
 - **2.** Martin Luther's focus on general principles of justification by faith
- **C.** Key commentaries on Romans (Dunn, Jewett, Moo, Schreiner, Keener)

V. Detailed Analysis of Romans 1:1 (Paul's Identity)

- **A.** Standard ancient letter format: Naming the sender (Paul)
- **B.** Paul's Roman Citizenship
 - **1.** Source of citizenship: likely slave ancestry / freedpersons (Synagogue of the Libertini, Acts 6:9)
 - **2.** Born a citizen (higher status than bribed citizenship)
 - **3.** Responding to objections against Paul's citizenship
 - **a.** Objection: Argument from silence in letters (Refuted: letters do not use tria nomina; Pliny's practice)
 - **b.** Objection: Reserved for municipal elite (Refuted: Ephesus inscriptions prove broad citizenship)
 - **c.** Objection: Required pagan practices (Refuted: Philo/Josephus prove Jewish citizens exempted)

- **d.** Objection: Paul was beaten with rods (Refuted: governors like Florus and Varys beat citizens)
 - **e.** Objection: Why hide it before beating in Philippi? (Refuted: strategic negotiating position/avoid case prolongation)
- **4.** Positive arguments supporting Paul's Roman citizenship
 - **a.** Respectable Roman name (cognomen)
 - **b.** Appeal to the Emperor in Acts (only a citizen could appeal)
 - **c.** Detailed trials and custody matching historical Roman law
- **C.** Paul's Three Descriptions in Romans 1:1
 - **1.** Slave of Christ Jesus (servant of God, high status representative)
 - **2.** Called Apostle
 - **a.** Divinely initiated commission (kletos)
 - **b.** Characteristics: signs, suffering, trans-local authorization/authority
 - **3.** Set apart for the Good News (aphoris menos)
 - **a.** Language of consecration/separation from the womb (Jeremiah 1:5)
 - **b.** Good News (Euangelion) rooted in Isaiah 52:7: salvation, peace, restoration