



INTRODUCTION TO
ROMANS

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Mayfair Ladies' Bible Class

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ROMANS IN HISTORY

- Martin Luther called Romans “the clearest gospel of all” and said that it would be worthwhile to memorize the entire book.
- In the Fall of 1891 at Nashville Bible School (now Lipscomb University), all students in James A. Harding’s class on Romans memorized the book and quoted it for the final exam.
- Generation after generation wrestles with this profound book as faith deepens.



AUTHORSHIP

- The letter bears Paul's name and is consistent with his other letters in style and thought.
- From Irenaeus (125 to 192 AD) onward, the letter is almost universally attributed to Paul. Today, virtually all Bible scholars accept Paul as the author.
- Paul dictated the letter to Tertius, his amanuensis (note-taker/writer, stenographer, secretary).

I Tertius, who wrote this letter, greet you in the Lord.

Romans 16:22 ESV



PAUL'S CIRCUMSTANCES

- Paul summarizes his circumstances in Romans 15:14-33.
 - Paul is at a turning point in his ministry to the Gentiles

Romans 15:18–19 (ESV)

18 For I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me to bring the Gentiles to obedience—by word and deed,
19 by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God—so that from Jerusalem and all the way around to Illyricum I have fulfilled the ministry of the gospel of Christ;

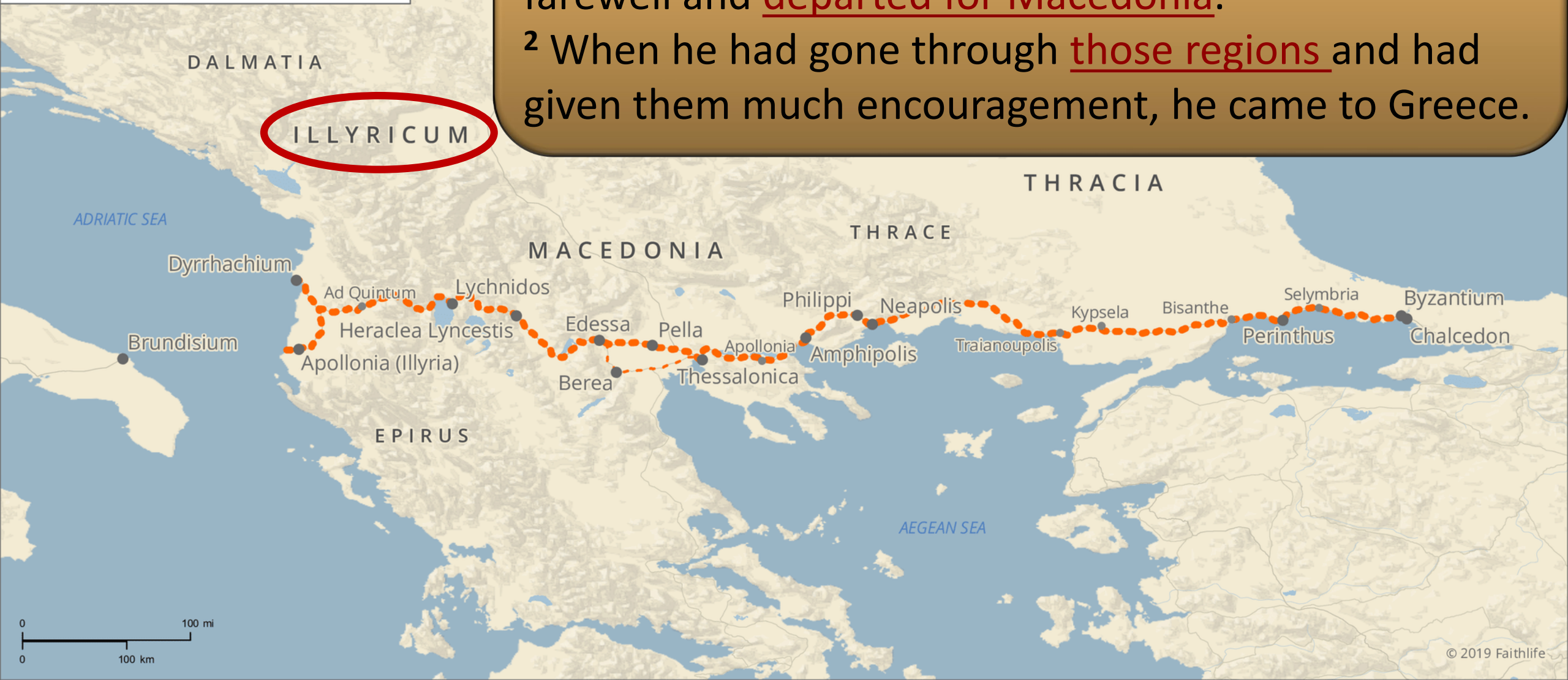
The Via Egnatia

— The Via Egnatia, developed by Gnaeus Egnatius around 145 B.C., helping Rome's connectivity with the East

Acts 20:1–2 (ESV)

¹ After the uproar [at Ephesus] ceased, Paul sent for the disciples, and after encouraging them, he said farewell and departed for Macedonia.

² When he had gone through those regions and had given them much encouragement, he came to Greece.





PAUL'S CIRCUMSTANCES

- Having evangelized the eastern Mediterranean, Paul sets his sights on Spain by way of Rome. (Romans 15:24)

Romans 15:24 (ESV)

²⁴ I hope to see you in passing as I go to Spain, and to be helped on my journey there by you, once I have enjoyed your company for a while.

- First, however, he's taking a cash gift from the Macedonian and Achaian churches to Jerusalem.
 - Will Jerusalem accept the gift?
 - Will Jerusalem embrace their Gentile brothers and sisters without imposing Judaism on them?



PAUL'S CIRCUMSTANCES

- We have reason to believe that Paul wrote the Roman letter while in Greece (likely Corinth) during the 3rd Missionary Journey



Paul spends three months in Achaia (Greece) (Acts 20:3)

Paul's Third Journey



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PAUL'S CIRCUMSTANCES

- Paul sent the letter to Rome with sister Phoebe from Cenchrea.

Romans 16:1–2 (ESV)

¹ I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant of the church at Cenchreae, ² that you may welcome her in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints, and help her in whatever she may need from you, for she has been a patron of many and of myself as well.





PAUL'S CIRCUMSTANCES

- At the time of writing, Paul is preparing to go to Jerusalem with a monetary gift from the Gentile churches.
- This places the writing of Romans in the Third Missionary Journey (Acts 18:23 thru 21:8)

FOUR KEY PLACES IN ROMANS

- Corinth ★
 - Paul's apparent location when he writes Romans
 - Next to Cenchrea
- Jerusalem ★
 - Paul's next destination
 - Where he will deliver money collected for the Judean churches enduring famine
 - Where he knows he will face challenges and opposition
- Rome ★
- Spain
 - The western frontier of the Empire where Paul wants to preach the Gospel



Roman Empire in 47 AD

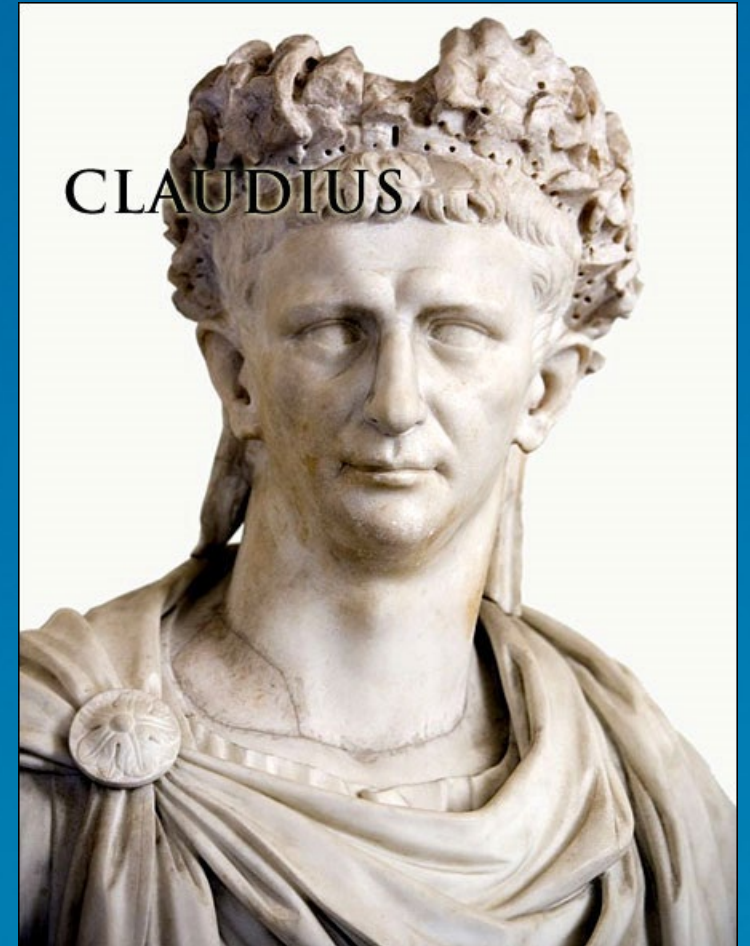
HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Acts 18:2–3 (ESV) [At Corinth]

And he [Paul] found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. And he went to see them, and because he was of the same trade he stayed with them and worked, for they were tentmakers by trade.

Acts 18:19 (ESV)

¹⁹ And they came to Ephesus, and he left them [Aquila and Priscilla] there, but he himself went into the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews.



Emperor Claudius (r. 41-54 AD)

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

- Nero succeeds Claudius as Emperor in 54 AD.
- Claudius' eviction of Jews expires & **Jews return to Rome.**
- Early years of his reign appear to have been successful and sane.
 - He expanded territories in Northern Palestine and left them under the rule of **King Herod Agrippa II** (who accused Paul of almost making him a Christian in Acts 25-26)
 - Agrippa II renames Caesarea Philippi as **Neronius.**



Emperor Nero (r. 54-68 AD)

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

- Nero's mental and moral decline becomes obvious in the 60's AD.
 - Rome burns and he blames the Christians.
 - He builds new palaces, etc. on the scorched earth.
 - He murders family members and loses his chief advisor.
 - Under delusions of grandeur, he believes all flattery.
 - He competes in the Olympic Games in AD 66.
 - He commits suicide in AD 68.



Emperor Nero (r. 54-68 AD)

CHRISTIANS IN ROME

ESV

Acts 2:8–11 (ESV)

And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language? Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians—we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God.”





CHRISTIANS IN ROME

- Priscilla & Aquila




Romans 16:3–4 (ESV)

³ Greet **Prisca and Aquila**, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus,

⁴ who risked their necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks but all the churches of the Gentiles give thanks as well.



Paul Meets Aquila and Priscilla in Corinth

-  Paul's route from Athens to Corinth
-  Aquila and Priscilla's route from Rome to Corinth
-  Silas and Timothy's route from Macedonia to Corinth

0 80 mi
0 80 km



AQUILA & PRISCILLA

- In Acts, we last see Priscilla and Aquila in 18:26, teaching Apollos in Ephesus.
- It would appear they returned to Rome when Nero becomes Emperor in late 56 or early 57 AD, since they are in Rome before Paul ends the 3rd Journey.

And Paul must have known of their return



TEXTUAL MATTERS

- There is evidence that editions of Romans were in circulation that omitted chapters 15 & 16.
- Most likely suspect for removing 15 appears to be **Marcion of Sinope (ca 85 to 160 AD)** or his followers.
 - Marcion spread gnostic heresy, preaching that the God of the NT is different from and superior to the God of the OT.
 - Marcion rejected all the apostles except Paul.
 - He circulated his own highly edited version of the NT called the **Apostolikon** (only an edited Luke and the 10 of Paul's letters addressed to churches)
 - He would have quickly deleted chapter 15 because he disliked its teaching (especially 15:4, 8).
- Its easy to understand why Chapter 16 could have been omitted for readers far away from Rome, since the personal greetings in 16 held less value than for the Roman church.



THE AUDIENCE

- We can draw some observations about the Roman church based on what we've encountered.
 - The believers in Rome include both Jewish and Gentile believers (Acts 2)
 - Jewish believers would have been expelled along with Jewish non-believers.
 - Gentile Christians in Rome have been on their own for a while.
 - Returning Jews would have encountered a more confident Gentile community within the Church—perhaps causing friction.
- Romans speaks to both Jew & Gentile Christians, so the audience is diverse.
- Cultural differences have bred conflict over matters of how faith is to be practiced.



PURPOSES OF THE LETTER

Four Views on the Reason or Purpose for the Epistle

- To defend Paul's reputation and his ministry
- To secure support for his future missionary trip to Spain
 - Includes giving proof of his orthodoxy
 - Includes teaching
- To aid the Christian Church in Rome
 - In this view Romans 1-11 appears as a theological backdrop for the "primary points" in chapters 12-16
 - Paul provides apostolic help for handling their controversies
- To combine all these reasons into an integrated letter containing:
 - Doctrine
 - Application for daily living
 - Introduction leading to future relationship and fellowship.



KEY THEME: GOSPEL

- There's no need to oversimplify and distill the book down to a single theme; however...
- Many see “Gospel” (*euangelion*) as the primary theme.
 - See Romans 1:16-17...

ROMANS 1:16-17

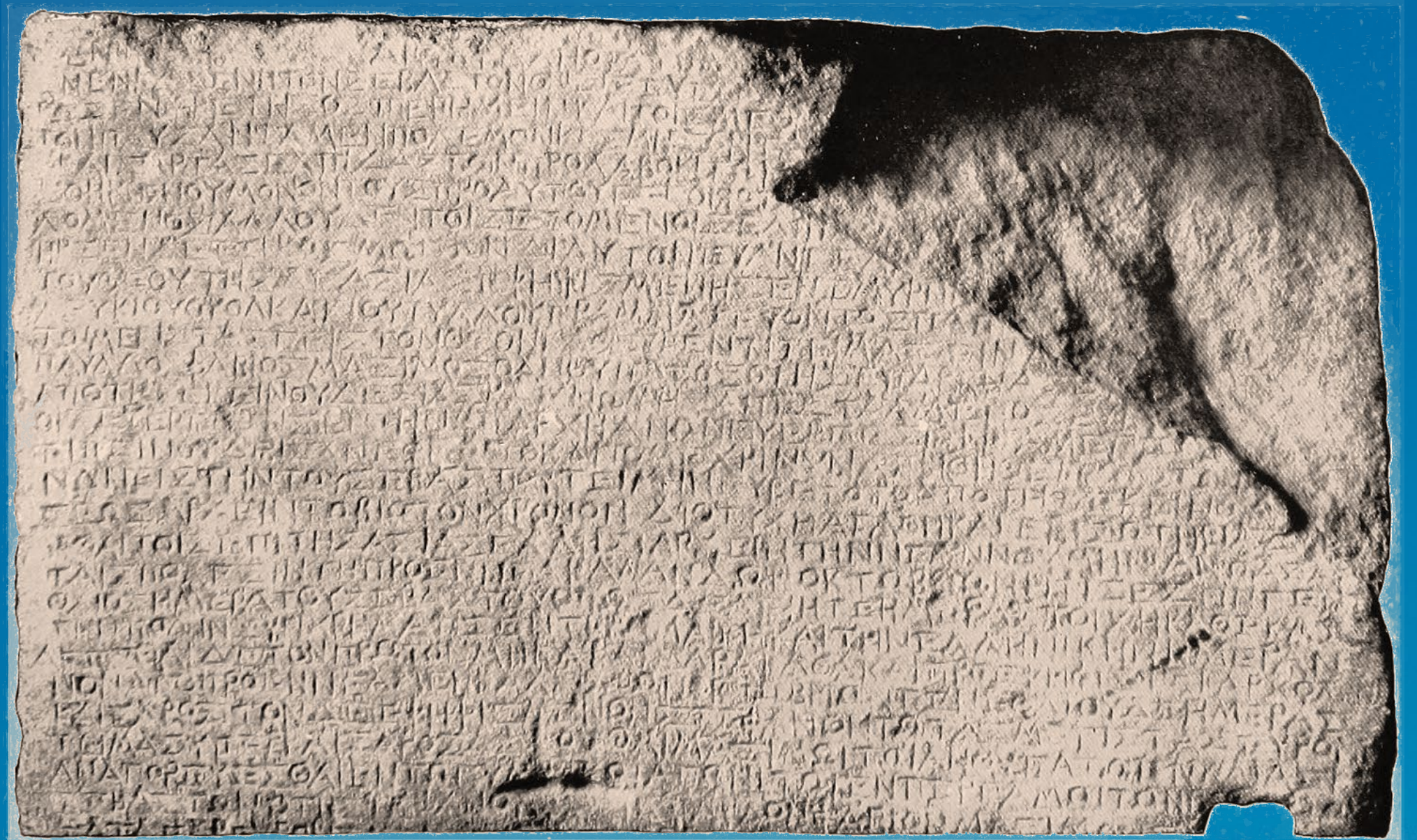
ESV

¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of the **gospel**, for **it** is the **power of God for salvation** to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

¹⁷ For in **it** the **righteousness of God** is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, “The righteous shall live by faith.”



THE PRIENE CALENDAR INSCRIPTION





ENGLISH TRANSLATION

It seemed good to the Greeks of Asia, in the opinion of the high priest Apollonius of Menophilus Azanitus: “Since Providence, which has ordered all things and is deeply interested in our life, has set in most perfect order by giving us Augustus, whom she filled with virtue that he might benefit humankind, sending him as a **savior**, both for us and for our descendants, that he might end war and arrange all things, and since he, Caesar, by his appearance (excelled even our anticipations), surpassing all previous benefactors, and not even leaving to posterity any hope of surpassing what he has done, and since **the birthday of the god Augustus was the beginning of the good tidings for the world that came by reason of him,**” which Asia resolved in Smyrna.’

JESUS' GOOD NEWS

Luke 4:16–17 (ESV)

¹⁶ And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read.

¹⁷ And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written,



JESUS' GOOD NEWS



Luke 4:18–19 (ESV)

¹⁸ “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed,
¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

STRUCTURE & OT REFERENCES

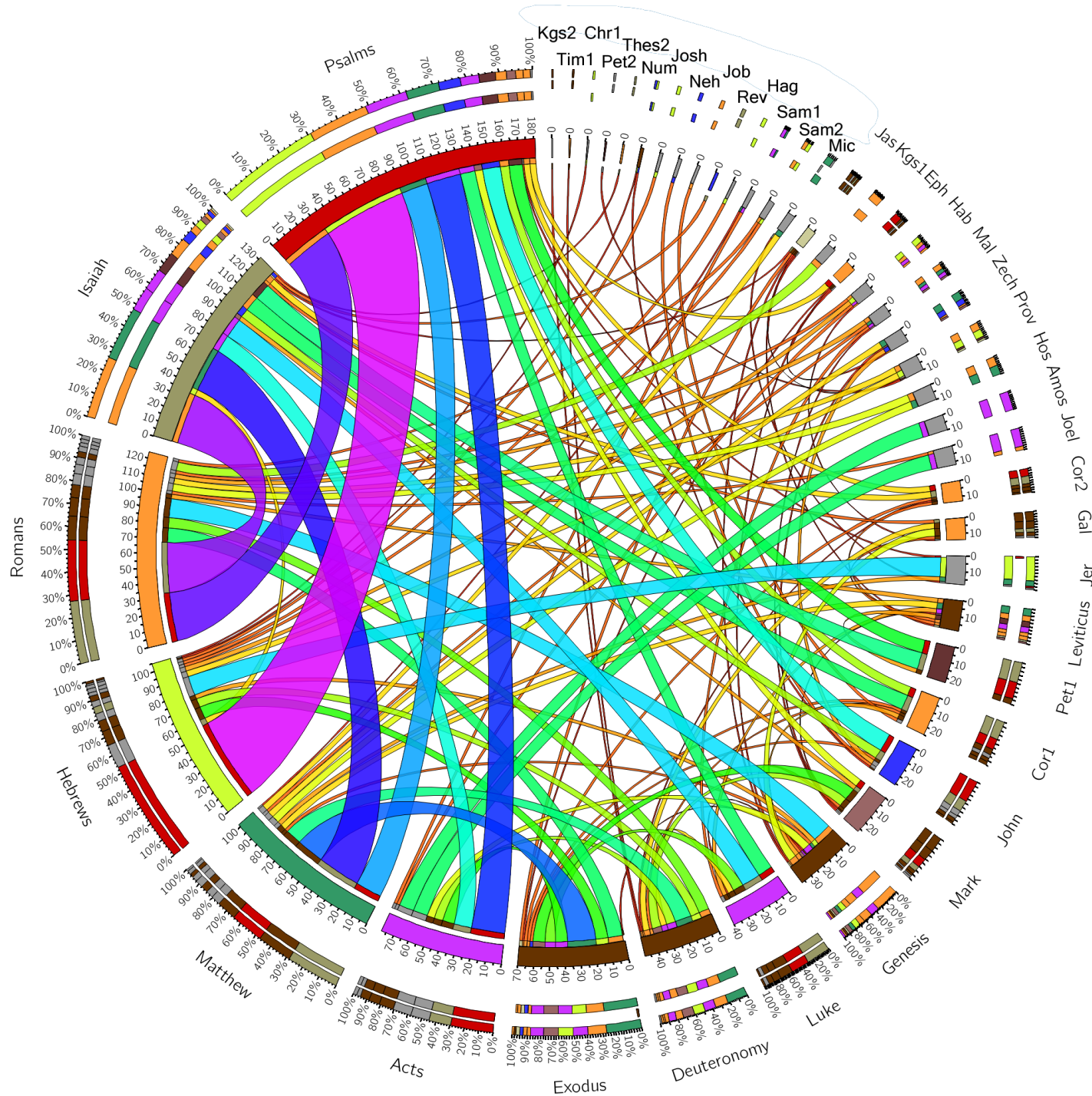
- This slide contained a video clip of scholar N.T. Wright discussing the structure of and Old Testament references within the Roman epistle.
- The slide has been removed to reduce file size.
- The video has been posted separately on the same web page where you found this file. Return there and click the video to watch it.





OT REFERENCES

- Genesis 1-3 (Adam)
- Genesis 15 (Abraham)
- Exodus (implied in Romans 5-8)
- Psalms 2, 8, 44, 110
- Isaiah 40-55



OT References in Romans

- Genesis
- Exodus
- Leviticus
- Numbers
- Deuteronomy
- 1 & 2 Samuel
- 1 Kings
- Job
- Psalms
- Proverbs
- Isaiah
- Jeremiah
- Hosea, Joel, Amos
- Micah, Nahum
- Habakkuk
- Malachi



KEY ISSUES IN ROMANS

- How should we deal with matters of opinion? Cultural differences?
- How do Jews and Gentiles relate to each other in the Kingdom?
- Does keeping the Law of Moses save the Jews?
- Must Gentiles keep the law to be saved?
- Are Gentiles 2nd Class Christians?
- What about non-believing Jews?
- How does the nature of God bear on these questions?
- What so good about the Good News?
- What should be the basis for church unity?
- What is the meaning of Christian baptism?
- Has God nullified the Old Covenant?



PAUL AND SPAIN

- Did Paul ever make it to Spain?
- Clement of Rome (AD96) wrote that Paul continued his missionary work after his first imprisonment in Rome and that he spread the Gospel to the most western reaches of the Empire (i.e. Spain).
- Clement also reports that Paul ended his life as a martyr upon his return to Rome.



ROMANS 1-4 OVERVIEW

- Watch BibleProject.com video online by clicking [HERE](#)



ROMANS 5-16 OVERVIEW

- Watch BibleProject.com video online by clicking [HERE](#).



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