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To all of you in Rome who are loved by God and are called to be his own holy people.

–Romans 1:7, NLT

Need a fresh look at God's salvation plan? Look no further than the book of Romans. It's a record of the age-old story, loaded with timeless meaning. Many believe it's the most profound of Paul's writings.

Martin Luther once said: "This epistle is the chief part of the New Testament and the very purest gospel. ... It can never be read or pondered too much. ... The more it is dealt with, the more precious it becomes and the better it tastes."

It's been said that if there were no other book upon which to build the doctrine of salvation, we could take the book of Romans and know all we need to know. It is the book when it comes to explaining what we believe about salvation.

Bible scholar Merrill C. Tenney says the book was written as a substitute for an immediate personal visit. Paul had carried the Roman church in his heart for three years before he met with them but was hindered from visiting them sooner (see Rom. 1:10; Acts 23:11).

The setting for the book is Rome, the greatest city of its day. Many believe that its inhabitants numbered more than 2 million—a large number of them slaves.

No one knows the exact origin of the small fledgling church, though many believe it started with Jews who were in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. Contrary to popular belief, Paul did not start the church in Rome.

Paul's intent in writing his letter was to ensure that the gentile church firmly grasped the truth concerning the gospel;

hence he offered clear, concise explanations of the faith, detailing why we believe what we believe. He began the letter by demonstrating that all men need the gospel of Christ and presented his case as if he were in a court of law trying to substantiate an argument. He disputed the idea that mankind is OK before God and clearly showed that all are guilty and stand condemned.

If Paul were alive today, he would undoubtedly have a problem with the flippant assessment, "I'm OK, you're OK." Paul's argument shows us to be guilty before God. However, he doesn't leave us in our depraved state but concludes that God Himself provides the antidote to sin.

Does the book sound like an interesting read? That's because it is! Maybe it's time to take another look. Go ahead; read it again. It's the power of God to save!

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