Romans Series Pt. 1

SPEAKER	Matt Ryniker
DATE	Sunday, November 2, 2025
PASSAGES	Romans 1; Genesis 12; Genesis 22; Luke 4; Psalm 67; Psalm 96; Isaiah 56; Romans 15
MESSAGE	Begins at 1:27:50 in the service

THE BIG IDEA

God has never been a tribal deity. From Genesis forward he has been saying out loud that every family on earth would be blessed in him, and Paul writes to Rome — of all places — as a man who finally saw it. The letter to the Romans begins inside a plan that was never hidden.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Paul opens Romans by insisting the gospel is nothing new: God "promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures." The letter presents itself as a fulfillment, not an innovation.
- The promise to Abraham was never about Abraham alone. "In you all the families of the earth shall be blessed" is the hinge, and the offspring through whom it comes is singular.
- Jesus read Isaiah in his hometown synagogue and stopped short of the line about vengeance — then named two Gentiles God had blessed over Israel. The town tried to throw him off a cliff for it.
- The real protagonist of the Old Testament is not Israel. It is God, and his stated desire is that all peoples praise him.
- God does not say his name *should* be great among the nations. He says it *will* be. He is not a coach shouting from the sideline while the players carry the whole burden.
- Rome was the superpower that oppressed Israel and crucified the Messiah, and Paul greets its Christians as "loved by God and called to be saints."
- The nations are not meant to be dragged behind Jesus in a parade of shame. They are meant to be glad and to sing for joy.

- The practical test is a thought experiment: name the people you quietly consider unreachable. That is the group this whole message is about.

▶ 1:27:52

Matt opened a new study in Romans with a disclaimer and a grin: anyone who has taken the Perspectives class on the world mission movement would recognize, on their own, exactly how much he was borrowing. "It'll be a massive plagiarism." Then he spent the hour on a single claim about the letter — that Paul writes as a Hebrew of Hebrews carrying the gospel to Romans because that is what God said he would do all along.

1. Paul's opening lines are a claim about history

▶ 1:29:06

> "Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures, concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord."
>
> ROMANS 1:1–4 ↗

Three things carry the weight, Matt said: God promised this beforehand through the prophets, it is about the Son made flesh, and the resurrection is what declares him Son of God in power. Then comes the purpose clause — grace and apostleship "to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations" (Romans 1:5). God raises up a Paul and raises up movements for his own name's sake. "God is not, has never been, and never will be asleep at the wheel for the church movement."

▶ 1:31:04

And then the greeting, which lands harder than familiarity lets us feel:
"To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints." Rome was the USA of the ancient world — the glory, the power, and all the baggage. Imagine being an early Christian there and wondering whether you actually belonged, given that your people oppressed Israel and crucified the Messiah. Matt drew the modern parallel deliberately: it is fashionable in some Christian circles to gain spiritual credit by distancing yourself from America. Even they, he said, are loved by God and called to be saints.

2. It was promised to Abraham, and the offspring is singular

▶ 1:32:39

> "And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing… and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."
>
> GENESIS 12:2–3 ↗

Matt paused over the odd argument in Hebrews 7:9–10, where Levi is said to have paid a tithe through Abraham because he was still "in the loins of his ancestor." Abraham carries future generations inside the moment. That makes the second promise less of a stretch:

▶ 1:33:48

> "I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore… and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice."
>
> GENESIS 22:17–18 ↗

"Offspring" in verse 18 is singular — a point Paul makes explicit use of elsewhere (Galatians 3:16). Which specific descendant of Abraham becomes blessing for every people? The question is older than Abraham: back in Genesis 3:15 there is enmity between the serpent's seed and the woman's, and hers crushes his head. Some representative of humanity, promised before there was an Israel to be tribal about.

3. Jesus stopped reading one line early

▶ 1:35:39

In the Nazareth synagogue Jesus read from Isaiah about the Spirit of the Lord upon him — good news to the poor, liberty to captives, the year of the Lord's favor — and stopped just before "the day of vengeance of our God" (Luke 4:18–19). Vengeance was exactly what some in the room wanted: freedom from Rome, judgment on the Gentiles who ruled them. Instead:

> "There were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah… and Elijah was sent to none of them but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian."
>
> LUKE 4:25–27 ↗

The response was not a raised eyebrow. The whole synagogue was filled with wrath, drove him out of town, and took him to the brow of the hill to throw him off the cliff. "That is so intense," Matt said. "That's a very intense response to what Jesus was saying." It was not a one-off, either — Matthew 24:14 says this gospel of the kingdom *will* be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations. Not should be. Will be.

4. The Old Testament said it plainly and often

▶ 1:37:47

Jesus was not reinterpreting the Hebrew scriptures. He was reading them.

> "That your way may be known on earth, your saving power among all nations. Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you! Let the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you judge the peoples with equity and guide the nations upon earth."
>
> PSALM 67:2–4 ↗

Here Matt made the observation the rest of the message leans on: the protagonist of the Old Testament is not Israel. "He is the protagonist, and it's on his sidelines that we're cheering all along the way." And his desire from the beginning was that all peoples would praise him, know him, be adopted by him, see his glory — and be *glad*. Not subdued and chained behind a conqueror in a parade of shame. Glad, singing for joy. Even Greeks. Even Romans. Even modern Americans. Even people in ISIS or Boko Haram.

▶ 1:39:28

Then the stack: Psalm 96:1–6 — declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples, because the gods of the peoples are worthless idols but the Lord made the heavens. When God calls people to worship him, Matt noted, he is not fishing for compliments; he is handing out the greatest privilege a creature can receive. Psalm 86:8–10 pushes it further — "all the nations you have made shall come and worship before you" — which quietly concedes that he made the other nations

too. This is not a local god jockeying for position. Then Isaiah, on foreigners who bind themselves to the Lord:

> "These I will bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer… for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples."
>
> ISAIAH 56:6–7 ↗

Again the grammar matters. Not *should* be called. *Shall* be. Malachi 1:11 repeats the construction twice in one verse — "my name will be great among the nations." "He's not a feeble and out-of-touch coach just shouting at the players on the field who have sole responsibility for doing everything God wants," Matt said. "He is the main player, and he is seeing to it."

5. Paul quotes it four times in a row

▶ 1:45:22

In Romans 10:19–21 Paul reaches back to Deuteronomy 32 and Isaiah 65: "I have been found by those who did not seek me," set against hands held out all day long to a disobedient people. God is taking his own initiative to have his name known, even where those called to serve him will not cooperate. Then, in Romans 15, four Old Testament citations land back to back — Matt's phrase was a silver magazine, pow, pow, pow: Psalm 18, Deuteronomy 32, Psalm 117, Isaiah 11.

> "Christ became a servant to the circumcised to show God's truthfulness, in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy… 'The root of Jesse will come, even he who arises to rule the Gentiles; in him will the Gentiles hope.'"
>
> ROMANS 15:8–12 ↗

Matt was careful with "rule" in that last line — not to dominate the nations or subject them shamefully, but to be their loving king. The king of the Jews is king of all nations, and he came not for vengeance on everyone outside his own small tribe but to bring light to the whole world.

6. So who is on your list?

▶ 1:47:51

The application came as a thought experiment rather than an assignment. Who, in your mind, is undesirable or unreachable — so far off that you have quietly written them off? For an ancient Jew, Rome. For us: Russians, Ukrainians, Chinese communists, Somali militants, ISIS, the USA. Matt was not accusing the room of spiritual bigotry so much as naming the stinginess that creeps into how we hold the gospel. “There’s nobody on the planet that we should write off regarding the gospel. Because it was for the sick that the great physician came.”

▶ 1:49:00

Most of us will not plant churches around the Mediterranean — though some might. What is available to everyone is to aid the work going to every last people, and to stay open-minded about whom God intends us to speak to right where we are. Matt closed praying as a Gentile at the far end of the map: “We Gentiles far from Israel, at the ends of the earth here in Texas, we bless your name.”

FOR FURTHER STUDY

SCRIPTURE IN THIS MESSAGE

- Romans 1:1–4
- Romans 1:5
- Romans 1:7
- Genesis 12:2–3
- Hebrews 7:9–10
- Genesis 22:17–18
- Galatians 3:16
- Genesis 3:15
- Luke 4:18–19
- Luke 4:25–27
- Luke 4:28–29
- Matthew 24:14
- Psalm 67:2–4
- Psalm 96:1–6
- Psalm 86:8–10
- Isaiah 56:6–7
- Malachi 1:11
- Romans 10:19–21
- Deuteronomy 32:21
- Isaiah 65:1–2
- Psalm 18:49
- Deuteronomy 32:43
- Psalm 117:1
- Isaiah 11:10
- Romans 15:8–12

FOR YOUR HOPE GROUP

1. Matt said the greeting “to all those in Rome who are loved by God” would have been hard for an early Christian there to believe. What makes it hard for you to believe God’s welcome extends that far?
2. Read Luke 4:25–27 again. Why do you think naming a Phoenician widow and a Syrian leper enraged that synagogue, and what is the modern version of that anger?
3. If the protagonist of the Old Testament is God rather than Israel, what changes in how you read the stories you know best?
4. Do the thought experiment out loud: who are the people you have quietly filed as unreachable? What formed that judgment?
5. Matt said most of us can at least aid the work and stay open about whom God sends us to. What is one concrete way you will do that this week?

ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Matt Ryniker is Hope Chapel’s senior pastor — his own description of the job — and reports to the church’s governing board, who he cheerfully calls his boss. He and his wife Mandy have been held up from Hope’s own pulpit as an example to the congregation. He spent a stretch of his working life as a public school teacher, and he still teaches the parent dedication classes where families commit to raising their children to follow Jesus — a theme that runs straight into this message.

Watch the full message:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uiPWa3Qqh7E&t=5270s

These notes summarise a message preached at Hope Chapel in Austin, Texas. They are a reader's aid, not a transcript — scripture references link to the full passage so you can read it in context.