

# Introduction

When the topic of God's election of Israel is raised in theological discussion, references to Romans 9–11 most often accompany the conversation. This passage is recognized for its emphasis on the sovereignty of God—for example, that God's will and reason for choosing Jacob rather than Esau is not known—and for its defense of God's faithfulness even though Israel has rejected God's Son. Yet significant aspects of Paul's argument in Romans 9–11 have been overlooked, leaving the reader puzzled as to why God chooses Jacob over Esau or how God can *impartially* elect Israel, yet give *priority* to Israel (“first to the Jew and then to the gentile”; 1:16). And what complicates a more clear understanding of these theological issues in Romans 9–11 is a lack of precise delineation of Paul's integrated form and style, such as his parallel thought rhymes and poetical structures (e.g., 9:30—10:3 and 11:11–24). A fresh analysis of Romans 9–11 is needed that answers these theological concerns and gives adequate attention to his literary form and style. This volume accomplishes this goal by interpreting the biblical text of Romans 9–11, section by section, explaining Paul's understanding of God's reason for electing the lesser son and how this election reveals God's compassionate heart and mind for Israel and his plan for the nations. In addition, the results of this study lead to a better understanding of Paul's purpose

in writing his letter as well as contributing to a better understanding of the letter as a whole.

### **Need**

To be more specific, when Paul opens the body of the Letter to the Romans, he confidently expresses that his “gospel is the power of God unto salvation to all who believe” and qualifies this statement with the phrase “first to the Jew and then the gentile” (1:16). It seems that here Paul emphasizes God’s priority in choosing Israel. Yet in the following passage, Paul restates this priority—“first to the Jew first and then the gentile” (2:9-11)—stressing that God does not show favoritism. This raises a logical problem—how can God give priority to Israel and, at the same time, be impartial in his selection? A clear answer is needed, and a careful analysis of Romans 9–11 appropriately resolves this paradox.

In addition, when Paul narrates God’s election of Jacob, he supports this decision with a quote from the prophet Malachi: “Jacob I loved, Esau I hated” (Rom 9:13; Mal 1:2-3). On the surface, it seems that Paul stresses God’s sovereignty, implying that the mind of God is not known in his choosing Israel. Yet Paul’s argument in Romans 9:6-29 and in the rest of the section, 9:30—11:32, is that the single characteristic in his election of Jacob was that God chose the son in the “lesser,” or humble position. This insight has not been appropriately emphasized in scholarship, and it is a central truth in understanding Paul’s main theme of humility in his letter, both in his relationship with the Roman church and also in his expectation from the believers so that his outreach to Spain is successful.

What has further complicated a better understanding of God’s character in his election of Israel, as well to the answer to the above issues, is that Romans 9–11 is a difficult passage to interpret. This is due to Paul’s combination of form and style of argument in a manner

unlike his contemporaries. The insight at the heart of this work is that Paul integrates an Old Testament literary form—the lament—with an exegetical style of argumentation best known from later rabbinical materials—the midrash—in order to reach a primarily *gentile* Christian audience. His overall arrangement of lament elements—address (9:1-5), body (9:6—11:32), and formal praise (11:33-36)—shows Paul’s participation in interceding for his people, revealing the heart of God. But rather than use poetry or song for the body of the lament, 9:6—11:32, Paul uses a midrashic style of argument, interpreting and applying Torah to meet the contemporary needs of his audience (incorporating primary and secondary texts, key words, thought rhymes, commentary, final thematic verses, etc.). In his first two distinct and interrelated midrashic forms, 9:6-29 and 9:30-10:21, Paul narrates in balanced logical sequence God’s faithful and merciful intervention in Israel’s history, preparing the recipients of his letter for a didactic and literary climax that reveals God’s plan for the nations in 11:1-32. I call Paul’s unique combination a “lament-midrash” and in subsequent chapters will be concerned with how each form shapes Paul’s argument.

Since Paul’s argument is tightly integrated, analyzing one particular section of the passage calls for an analysis of the whole. Yet no one volume on Romans has yet carefully identified Paul’s forms or traced the cumulative meaning of the argument. For example, almost all of the works on Romans 9–11 are limited to published dissertations which, more recently, focus on the background texts that influenced Paul’s thought, or they focus on some form of rhetorical analysis.<sup>1</sup>

1. For example: Pablo Gadenz, *Called from the Jews and from the Gentiles: Pauline Ecclesiology in Romans 9-11* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009); Johann D. Kim, *God, Israel, and the Gentiles: Rhetoric and Situation in Romans 9-11* (Atlanta: SBL, 2000); Francis Watson, *Paul, Judaism, and the Gentiles: A Sociological Approach* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); John Lodge, *Romans 9-11: A Reader-Response Analysis* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996); Richard Bell, *Provoked to Jealousy: The Origin and Purpose of the Jealousy Motif in Romans 9-11* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1994); James Aageson, *Paul's Use of Scripture* (1983); Elizabeth E. Johnson, *The*

The numerous articles and chapters written on Romans 9–11 analyze a certain verse or passage, but rarely the whole of Romans 9–11. The long list of Romans commentaries are primarily written for resource purposes, and the one-volume works do not work through each section of the argument but seek out particular passages based on a theme or view.<sup>2</sup> These works provide invaluable insight and rich understanding, but a one-volume work is needed that explains the biblical text, section by section, giving attention to Paul’s literary forms and meaning and leading to a clear perspective of God’s faithful and *merciful* character in his impartial election of Israel, the son in the *humble* position.

Several other contributions are made in this work. First, Paul’s intercessory experience “in” Christ is evidenced not only in the opening section, 9:1-5, but throughout the argument, revealing God’s compassion decision in election. Second, this work makes evident Paul’s literary use of the names “Israel” and “gentiles” as a reference to “works” and “faith” without compromising the theme of God’s impartiality to both Jew and gentile, 10:12, and without limiting Paul from warning Christian gentiles about the consequence

*Function of Apocalyptic and Wisdom Traditions in Romans 9-11* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989); Folker Siegert, *Argumentation bei Paulus, Gezeigt an Röm 9-11* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1985); Paul Dinter, *The Remnant of Israel and the Stone of Stumbling in Zion according to Paul* (1980); H. L. Ellison, *The Mystery of Israel: An Exposition of Romans 9-11* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1966); and Johannes Munck, *Christ & Israel: An Interpretation of Romans 9-11*, trans. Ingeborg Nixon (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967).

2. For example: J. R. Daniel Cook traces and explains the subject of resurrection throughout the letter in *Unlocking Romans* (2008); Neil Elliott interprets Romans in light of an imperial context in *The Arrogance of Nations: Reading Romans in the Shadow of Empire* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008); David Wallace reexamines Romans against the imperial imagery from Virgil’s *Aeneid* in *The Gospel of God: Romans as Paul’s Aeneid* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2008); Andrew Das argues for a gentile audience in *Solving the Romans Debate* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007). P. J. Bekken analyzes the letter in light of Deuteronomy 30:12-14 in *The Word is Near You: A Study of Deuteronomy 30:12-14 in Paul’s Letter to the Romans in a Jewish Context* (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2007); Richard Bell investigates Paul’s theology of Israel in *The Irrevocable Call of God: An Inquiry into Paul’s Theology of Israel* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005); and Daniel Chae focuses his study on Paul’s self-awareness in *An Apostle in Paul as Apostle to the Gentiles* (1997).

of pride, 11:18–22. This is an important distinction that contributes to the meaning of “all Israel” near the end of Paul’s argument, 11:26. Third, Paul’s various poetic structures, such as a balanced chiasm in 9:30–10:3 and a larger poetic structure in 11:10–24 (a *hapax legomenon*), are precisely delineated. Fourth, this analysis supports the view that Romans 9–11 is one of three relevant sections of the letter, neither an addendum nor a climax, that leads the reader to the practical admonitions in the final chapters of the body of the letter.

### Method

Since this effort requires a section-by-section examination of Romans 9–11, gleaning relevant information from the vast amounts of secondary literature written about Romans demands selectivity. Information from exegetical works and theological themes are not discussed topically but according to the passage at hand. In other words, this book guides the reader through Paul’s arguments, focusing on Paul’s emphasis on God’s *character* in election in Romans 9–11, and points out the distinctive contribution of the particular passage at hand in relation to the overall argument and purpose of the letter.

For example, themes such as the law and righteousness are not discussed in detail except when these themes occur, but since “law” and “righteousness” are central themes in Romans 3 and in Romans 9:30–10:3, both sections are explored with respect to the meaning in Romans 9:30–10:3.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, the insight gained in this book concerning the character of God in election, 9:6–18, furthers an understanding of the practical issues in chapters 14–15, but a lengthy dialogue about the “weak” and the “strong” is not given. Theological

3. For the purpose of reducing visual clutter, whenever possible, commas are used to bracket scriptural citations for a Romans passage. Parentheses are used for other biblical books and for Romans citations when commas distract from readability.

implications that do relate to the rest of the letter are usually discussed at the end of each section. In summation, this author respects the contributions of the wide range of approaches (e.g., socio-historical, rhetorical, etc.), but chooses an eclectic approach to elucidate the text's meaning within the bounds of form, thematic coherence, and Pauline theology.

This work is not an exhaustive commentary nor a critical evaluation of the extensive materials written about Romans; rather, this work provides a fresh approach with research and support to engage the scholar and to guide the biblical studies student in understanding Paul's message of God's compassionate heart and mind in his election of Israel.

### Overview

Chapter 1 analyzes Romans 9:1-5 in light of Paul's intercessory petition. Chapter 2 focuses on Paul's first midrashic form—God's faithfulness for Israel, 9:6-29. This section of Paul's argument begins the body of Paul's lament and clarifies the nature of God's character in election. He narrates a reversal—the inclusion of the gentiles—hinting at the hardening of Israel. Chapter 3 analyzes the second midrashic form, 9:30—10:21,<sup>4</sup> and explains how Paul builds upon the previous section, 9:6-29, by narrating the Moses account with respect to Christ, leading the listener to the conclusion that faith comes by hearing the word of Christ. Chapter 4 shows Paul's juxtaposition of two identities—"remnant" Israel and "hardened" Israel—in 11:1-10, as Paul prepares the reader for the mystery revealed concerning Israel's salvation, 11:11-32. Chapter 5 then explains Paul's praise to God for his infinite wisdom, 11:33-36.

4. The phrase "midrashic form" is used rather than "midrash" because while Paul employs elements of midrash, his cohesive sections of argument cannot be neatly categorized as rabbinical "midrash."

It is important to note that Romans 9–11 continues Paul’s thought and argument from the first two sections of his letter, 1:17—5:11 and 5:13—8:39. He integrates themes from these sections into the lament-midrash of Romans 9–11, providing a solid basis for his practical admonition in the final section of the body of the letter, 12:1—15:13.

This examination is not an exhaustive commentary or a critical evaluation of the extensive materials written about Romans. Rather, a fresh approach is intended through research and support for the purpose of understanding Paul’s view of God’s plan for Israel’s salvation. However, because of the integrated nature of the content of Romans 9–11 with the rest of the letter, a discussion of relevant literary concerns—style, genre, and letter divisions—and necessary background information—Paul’s identity, purpose, and audience—is needed in this Introduction to give an appropriate frame of reference for interpretation.

### **Literary Concerns**

Three basic suppositions undergird this work: (1) God’s personal revelation to Paul is the driving force behind the message of his letter; (2) Paul’s primary support for his assertions come from the Old Testament; and (3) Paul employs an integrated style using a variety of forms. While scholars generally agree to these claims, there is considerable disagreement concerning the “degree” to which they are true. Thus, because of its bearing upon meaning, some clarity is important at the outset concerning Paul’s general style.

### **General Style**

In his letters, Paul ministers to people in a manner that exhibits diplomacy, depth of knowledge, and attention to detail. His choice

of vocabulary shows familiarity with the customs and culture of the cities and peoples for whom his letters were written, and without compromising his convictions or message, he skillfully adapts to the needs of individual congregations. In his own words: “I become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some” (1 Cor. 9:22-23). Paul seeks to achieve this goal in his letters through instruction as he responds to practical issues with sensitivity and with an accomplished use of the Old Testament. In this sense, Paul’s theological fight takes place in the arena of knowledge, and his intelligence, training, and commission fit well with his natural motivation to reason. His pen is a diplomatic instrument for advancing the gospel.

But more than his relational skill and competence, the revelation he receives from Jesus Christ is what drives him. After being born and raised in cosmopolitan Tarsus, Paul as a young boy earned his theological education in Jerusalem, where he studied the Torah and the traditions of his fathers. He describes his pursuit of the law as “zealous,” “beyond that of his peers,” and on “behalf of Israel” (Gal 1:14f). As a young man on a journey to Damascus to carry out orders against Christians, he encountered the Person of Christ. His memorization of Torah, his view of prophecy, and his rabbinical training now make sense in light of Jesus Christ, a radical reframing of his heart and mind, a reshaping of his theology and practice. Once a persecutor of Christ, now he endures physical suffering, threats, and insults from his own people as the Spirit guides him in proclaiming his message. What was once a centripetal, inclusive focus of law and Israel, has become a centrifugal outreach as he embraces gentile culture to communicate God’s grace.

This sensitivity to diverse cultures, as well as his literary skill, raise the question as to the influence of Greco-Roman rhetorical education on Paul’s writing. On the surface, this may not seem to be

an important issue but, when diagramming Paul's thought flow or when determining Paul's theological emphases at certain points in his arguments, awareness of a rhetorical device or the rhetorical purpose within a section can and does directly affect the meaning of a passage, especially more technical ones such as Romans 9–11. While scholars agree that Paul utilizes Greek literary devices, there is no consensus as to the precise nature and extent of use.

If Paul were formally trained in rhetoric, then the sections in his letters would show a close overlap with ancient categories,<sup>5</sup> but they do not. Some New Testament scholars try to force Paul's content and form into rhetorical categories that were intended for speech training, not letter writing. It is more reasonable and accurate to assume that Paul writes with general rhetorical principles in mind—that is to say, his writings do not show formal training in ancient rhetoric, but his writings do show the use of common literary techniques of his day.

5. For the view that Paul may have had some formal training in rhetoric, see R. F. Hock, "Paul and Greco Roman Education," 215f. Obviously Paul utilized some of the conventions of his day for speaking in his letter writing—such as diatribe, enthymemes, and persuasive elements—but he does not follow a clear cut Greco-Roman rhetorical model as discussed in contemporary handbooks of his day: Aristotle's *Rhetorica*, Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria*, and Cicero's *De Oratore* and *De Inventione*. See also Corbett, *Classical Rhetoric*, 1990. It may be that Paul had access to handbooks or to basic rhetorical elements in school. What is important to know about the debate about ancient rhetoric is that the discipline of rhetoric was for "speaking," and while letter writing contains similar elements to a speech, there are no clear parallels of letter writing in the first century that compare to Paul's form and style. For further reading on a favorable view of Paul's use of rhetoric: G. A. Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation*, 10f; Stanley Stowers, *A Rereading of Romans: Justice, Jews, and Gentiles* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994), 17f; R. D. Anderson, *Ancient Rhetorical Theory and Paul*, 278f. For a less favorable view, see J. Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul the Letter-Writer*, 79–83. A method for applying current rhetorical theory has been developed in recent years; see Dennis Stamps, "Rhetorical Criticism of the New Testament: Ancient and Modern Evaluations of Argumentation," in *Approaches to New Testament Studies*, eds. Stanley E. Porter and David Tombs (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 129–69; and Duane Watson and Alan Hauser, *Rhetorical Criticism of the Bible* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 101–9.

For example, Paul uses diatribe<sup>6</sup> (a device in which the speaker speaks to an imaginary student for the purpose of instruction) stylistically in his letters, particularly Romans (e.g., 2:17f and 9:19–23). But since this is a common device in Greek literature and Judaism, it is more likely that Greek culture—literature, architecture, art, and philosophy—permeated the known world, including Jewish Palestine. It would be appropriate for a Pharisaic Jew, converted to Christianity, whose purpose was to *reach gentiles* throughout the world, to mix his form and style appropriately. And while Paul clearly arranges his arguments in persuasive patterns, the contents of his letters do not read like first-century missives, writings, or speeches of his day. His letters reveal his Jewish thought processes as well as Greek part-to-whole argument, with the bulk of his support from Scripture.<sup>7</sup> Metaphorically speaking, the Jewish Paul wears a Greco-Roman literary jacket.<sup>8</sup>

Paul exhibits a unique writing style, even more so in Romans 9–11. Nowhere else in his correspondences does Paul arrange his argument within a “lament” sequence nor cohesively integrate midrashic elements with as many rich allusions and quotations from the Old Testament. Not surprisingly, throughout his elaboration on God’s election of Israel, he uses a mix of literary devices that require attention to Old Testament contexts and his culture. All this to say, paying attention to this literary complexity results in a better understanding of his meaning.<sup>9</sup>

6. For the view of Romans 9–11 as a diatribe, see Changwon Song, *Reading Romans as a Diatribe* (New York: Lang, 2004), 15f.

7. James Aageson, “Scripture and Structure in the Development of the Argument in Romans 9–11,” *CBQ* 48 (1986): 286–87.

8. It may also be important to note that while Paul’s style shows some similarities to other Jewish authors, such as Philo and Josephus, his letters are quite different in logic, arrangement, and literary flow. Paul shares a philosophical approach with Philo in use of allegory and use of the Old Testament, but even a cursory reading reveals the marked differences in Paul’s form and purpose. Paul’s formal, conversational letters read quite differently than the historical accounts written by contemporaries of Paul, such as Philo and Josephus.

## Genre

Paul combines lament and integrated argument to narrate God's plan for Israel.<sup>10</sup> The lament elements express Paul's and God's compassion for Israel. For Paul's experience "in" Christ, 9:1, gives him a perspective in which he identifies with Old Testament prophets who interceded for Israel—such as Moses, Elijah, and Isaiah.<sup>11</sup> Within his logical arrangement, he incorporates midrashic elements and Scriptural support leading the listener to understand the wisdom of God for Israel and the nations. A general explanation of his literary method—combining lament and midrashic argument—is given below. However, since the opening verses, 9:1-5, set the emotional tone for the lament, a closer look at Paul's participation in interceding for Israel is presented in the first chapter ("Paul's Grief for Israel"), with attention given to the thematic continuity of intercession in Romans 9-11, and in the rest of the letter.

## Lament

The first and last sections (9:1-5; 11:33-36) frame Paul's arguments, forming an *inclusio*, moving the reader from grief to praise.

9. This information must also be combined with related theology from his letters and what we know about him, particularly from his experiences recorded in Acts.
10. Paul also incorporates Greco-Roman literary devices that are common to his culture. This includes his use of citation in handling quotations, which is similar to Greco-Roman style; see Stanley, *Paul and the Language*, 291 and 360. Just as Paul uses language to communicate to publics at different levels, it may be that he utilizes rhetorical principles accordingly. More certainly, Paul refers to himself in the first person (twenty-seven times) in Romans 9-11—making his appeal personal as a Jew on behalf of other Jews; Stowers, *Rereading of Romans*, 292.
11. For Moses as a prophetic figure in Romans 9-11, see Michel Quesnel's discussion, "La Figure de Moïse en Romains 9-11," *New Testament Studies* 49, no. 3 (2003): 321-35. "David" as well could be included in the list above. For the view of David as prophet in Judaism, see Margaret Daly-Denton, "David the Psalmist: Jewish Antecedents of a New Testament Datum," *Australian Biblical Review* 52 (2004): 32-47.

<b>Grief for Israel</b>	9:1-5
God's election	9:6-29
Israel's failure	9:30--10:21
God's plan of salvation	11:1-32
<b>Praise for God's Wisdom</b>	11:32-36

Paul's content and arrangement in these chapters follow an Old Testament lament pattern of an address, body, and a final praise. In the address, the speaker establishes his right to speak, he emphasizes the covenant, and he invokes God's action on Israel's behalf. In Paul's address, 9:1-5, he establishes his right to speak and lists the covenantal gifts, but rather than evoke feelings of confidence, he prays to be cursed from Christ on behalf of his brothers. And by not directly invoking *God* to act on Israel's behalf, he builds suspense concerning Israel's outcome ("What will happen to Israel?").<sup>12</sup>

Typically in the body of an Old Testament lament, the speaker accuses God or others and gives reasons for the distress. The mood will shift to God's faithfulness and a turning back to God. The listener is then brought to a heightened praise for God's actions and character. But unlike the tone and arrangement of a poem or song, Paul uses logical arguments within a lament sequence to defend God's faithfulness, a topic with which Old Testament laments are ultimately concerned.<sup>13</sup> In the first two sections of the body of his

12. Listening to Paul's anguish would also likely stir emotions from the non-Hebrew reader, since a lament has broad range of social and theological dimensions. However, it was unusual for a male to be presented as in literature as lamenting in this way, though permitted; see Ann Suter, *Male Lament in Greek Tragedy*, 156-80; and Karen Bassi, *Acting Like Men*, 104f. On the one hand, participation in a lament may be a way of regaining kingly or moral authority; Mark Griffith, "The King and Eye: The Rule of the Father in Greek Tragedy," *Proceedings for the Cambridge Philological Society* 44 (1998): 62f. But on the other hand, lament was scorned; see Plato, *Republic*, 3.388a-e and 10.604b-607a.

13. Most commentaries divide the body of Paul's lament, 9:6-11:32, into three major sections but with variation. The outline of Romans 9-11 with its lament frame and argument becomes clearer as the form is explained in the following chapters. Interestingly, Gadenz compares 9-11

lament, he accuses not God, but Israel for their loss, 9:6-29 and 9:30—10:21, and bases his reasoning on God's character in his election of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. In the end, "all Israel" returns to God, 11:1-31, and Paul gives glory to God, 11:33-36.

### Midrashic Elements

Generally speaking, Romans 9–11 is unique not only because of the lament elements but also because of Paul's use of parallel thought and literary devices. He follows a basic pattern of commentary with proof texts (e.g., 9:6-18), supporting his reasoning with Old Testament Scripture. In the first two major sections of the body of his lament, he ends his argument with a *testimonia*, 9:26-29 and 10:18-21. On two occasions he parallels his ideas through chiasmic structures, 9:30—10:4 and 11:11-24, and he identifies himself with Old Testament prophets (e.g., 11:1-10). He expresses emotion, his own and God's (e.g., 10:1, 21). He keeps the body of the argument neatly parallel, and threads the themes of each section of the midrashic sections, 9:6-11:24, into a unified whole in the final verses of the body of his midrash, 11:25-31.

More specifically, the theme texts in a midrash are drawn from the Torah—a primary text is introduced and then explained by a secondary text. As the texts are elaborated on, key words are chosen based on the author's current context, *but most often this is done with the Old Testament context in mind*. The author of the midrash may explicitly state the key word in his discussion or he may intentionally leave the key word out, trusting that the listener will remember the Old Testament verse and supply the key word—an interesting

against the postexilic penitential prayers (Azariah's prayer, Dan. 3:26–45 LXX; Dan. 9:4-19; Bar. 1:15–3:8) according to a threefold movement: (1) acclamation of God's justice and power; (2) confession of Israel's sinfulness and culpability; and (3) supplication for God's mercy and salvation/deliverance, *Called from the Jews*, 57f (Gadenz builds upon Collin's commentary on Daniel [p. 350] as well as Goldingay's [p. 233]). See also, F. Watson's discussion of the postexilic penitential prayers in *Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith*, 459–61.

and challenging instructional method. For example, in 9:6-29, Paul utilizes the Pentateuch for his primary text—Genesis 21:12 (Rom. 9:6-7)—and his secondary text—Genesis 18:10 (Rom. 9:9), then uses other Scriptural support. “Key words”—seed, children, call, and son (σπέρμα, τέκνα, καλέω, and υἱός)—within the midrash connect thematically to the primary and secondary texts.<sup>14</sup>

Yet, a few problems present themselves when comparing Paul’s letters to rabbinical texts. First, the parallels of rabbinic literature that scholars compare with Paul’s writings come primarily from a later period, after the fall of Jerusalem (70 CE). This means that it is not certain what methods Paul’s contemporaries were using. Second, Paul’s arrangement and style in Romans 9–11 differ from these later midrashic forms. However, the basic methods of exegesis taught by Hillel are found consistently in Paul’s thought.<sup>15</sup> This is not surprising, since Paul was trained by Gamaliel (Acts 22:3), a grandson or son of Hillel. Generally this type of midrash exegesis had two purposes: (a) textual interpretation and (b) Torah application to contemporary needs.<sup>16</sup> Paul, as a Benjaminite, likely remained part of a Jewish community loyal to Torah-centered Judaism (Phil. 3:4–6), but as a missionary called to proclaim his message to the gentiles, his thought was mixed with literary devices and a keen sense for his audience’s culture. Therefore, the phrases “midrashic elements”

14. Ellis finds a pattern: 9:6-7, theme and initial text (Gen. 21:12); 9:9, a second supplemental text (Gen. 18:10); and 9:10-28, additional citations (Rom. 9:13, 15, 17, 25-28) and catch words (καλέω and υἱός; Rom. 9:12, 24-26 and 27), with subordinate texts from other scripture, *Prophecy and Hermeneutic*, 155. The question as to why Paul would combine Jewish lament and midrash elements to reach the Christian gentiles is a relevant one. It would seem, though, that this would align with his purpose of engendering humility among the gentile Christians (11:17-21) for them to learn some of Paul’s meaning, if help was needed, from knowledgeable Jewish Christians among them.

15. For Hillel’s exegetical methods, see *t. Sanh.* 7.11; *‘Abot R. Nat* [A] §37.

16. For example, Ben Sira taught wisdom to upper-class young men (Sir.51:23-28), and older students received training in advanced methods of interpretation. At age six or seven, schools taught boys the Hebrew Bible, mainly the Torah (*y. Ketub.* 32c, 4).

or “midrashic-type form” are used in this discussion rather than the technical term “midrash.”

### Letter Divisions

More formal in tone and style than his other letters, Paul’s missive to the Romans serves as a diplomatic representative of his presence until he travels to them in person. His salutation and thanksgiving sections introduce and foreshadow the tone and content of the body of his letter. He presents his theme and content in four interrelated sections:

1:1-7	Salutation
1:8-15	Thanksgiving
1:16--15:13	Body of the Letter
1:16	Theme
1:17--5:11	Part I: Atonement through Faith
5:12--8:39	Part II: Life in Christ
9:1--11:36	Part III: God’s Faithfulness to Israel
12:1--15:13	Part IV: Practical Admonitions
15:14-33	Informal Plans
16:1-24	Greetings
16:25-27	Doxology

In the final part of his letter, he communicates his agenda in a less formal tone, 15:14–33, greets the believers, 16:1–24, and gives praise to God, 16:25–27.

More specifically, the central passage in the Letter of Romans is Christ’s sacrificial atonement for sin, 3:21–26, the means of salvation through faith rather than by the law (or “works”). Paul supports this theme with Old Testament passages, 4:1–25, and then shows how Christ’s atonement affects the life of those who believe, 5:12—8:39: “where sin increases, grace abounds more.” In his third section,

9:1—11:36, Paul illustrates how this grace principle, based on the atoning sacrifice of Christ, is worked out in the salvific plan of God for Israel—“where Israel disobeys, God’s grace abounds more.” In this way, the theological force of the gospel flows from Romans 3:21–26, and the elaboration of the effects of God’s atonement are explained in the following chapters. Thus, the first three sections of the body of the letter provide a formal, integrated, and powerful theological platform for practical admonitions in the fourth section of the body of the letter, 12:1—15:13.<sup>17</sup>

17. All of the content in Paul’s letter was written to the Roman believers for a specific purpose. Paul writes with authority concerning the gospel and makes clear his expectations of them in relation to his future plans. His entire message informs and reminds them of the truths of the gospel, knowing that they are able to instruct each other. While a variety of elements contribute to the formal nature of his letter, its main purpose has been mistaken for other nonrelated purposes, such as a doctrinal treatise, Anders Nygren, *Commentary on Romans* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1949), 7f; a document summarizing and developing his most important themes, Günther Bornkamm, “The Letter to the Romans as Paul’s Last Will and Testament,” in *The Romans Debate*, ed. Karl P. Donfried (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1977), 27; important content in preparation for his trip to Jerusalem, M. Jack Suggs, “‘The Word is Near You’: Romans 10:6–10 within the Purpose of the Letter,” in *Christian History and Interpretation*, ed. W. R. Farmer, C. F. D. Moule, and R. R. Niebuhr (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 291; and Jacob Jervell, “Letter to Jerusalem,” in *The Romans Debate*, ed. Karl P. Donfried (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1977), 61–74; or some carryover issue from another church, Robert J. Karris, “Romans 14:1—15:13 and the Occasion of Romans,” *CBQ* 25 (1973): 155–78. Paul’s letter to the Romans addresses a specific situation; see Mark Reasoner, *The Strong and the Weak: Romans 14.1—15.13 in Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) and Nelio Schneider, *Die ‘Schwachen’ in der Christlichen Gemeinde Roms*. It is apparent that Paul expects the theology of his letter—which powerfully undergirds his words in 14:1—15:6 concerning the “weak” and the “strong”—to have continuing effect on the Roman believers’ lives. He does so not necessarily to see the letter as a substitute for his work if he cannot make a personal visit to Rome or Spain (see Angelika Reichert, *Der Römerbrief Als Gratwanderung: Eine Untersuchung zur Abfassungsproblematik* [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2001], 77f), but because the content of his letter addresses a “pride” issue. Humility produces the kind of fruit needed to reach those who do not know Christ in Rome, the region, and the world. Romans 9–11, then, is not an afterthought as C. H. Dodd suggests (*The Epistle of Paul to the Romans*, 160). Nor does Romans 9–11 seem to be the climax of the letter (Joseph Fitzmyer, *Romans* [New York: Doubleday, 1993], 541; Krister Stendahl, *Paul among Jews and Gentiles* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), 4; and Witherington, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 244). However, Paul’s despairing grief in 9:1–5 does seem to be the most emotionally intense moment of the letter, especially against the movement from the intimacy of Christ’s love in chapter 8. Most likely, Paul focuses almost exclusively on the cross and resurrection; Günter Wasserburg, “Romans 9–11 and Jewish Christian Dialogue,” in *Reading Israel in Romans: Legitimacy and Plausibility of*

This structural sequence leads Paul’s listeners to choose humility, a decision that he sees as necessary for his successful evangelistic outreach—in Rome and in the surrounding region, particularly Spain. His formal arrangement in the body of the letter also complements his informal discussion concerning his travel plans in 15:14–33. Of the New Testament letters of Paul, only in Romans does Paul reveal a personal motive for his zeal concerning Israel—Paul knows that when the “full number” of gentiles come to know Christ, then the Jews, his people, will become jealous and return to Christ in “full number.”

Figuratively speaking, fertile “humble” soil among the Roman church results in a greater harvest of “fruit” among the nations (gentiles). So when Paul discloses his agenda concerning his upcoming trip to Jerusalem and to Spain, he demonstrates for them a real-life, practical model of the theological content that he explained in the body of his letter, 1:16—15:13;<sup>18</sup> he practices what he preaches. Now that an overview of Paul’s style and arrangement has been discussed, a closer look at his identity, purpose, and audience is given.

### General Background

Due to the abundance of interest concerning the nature and purpose of Paul’s letter, and due to the lack of agreement concerning how Romans 9–11 fits within Paul’s purpose in writing the letter, a pointed discourse concerning Paul’s identity, purpose, and audience is warranted.

*Divergent Interpretations*, eds. Cristina Grenholm and Daniel Patte (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2000), 1:177–80.

18. This is quite evident concerning the Jerusalem offering with respect to Paul’s use of the olive tree metaphor and his imperatives in chapter 11.

## Paul's Identity

Based on Paul's direct and indirect language in his introductory and concluding remarks, 1:1-15 and 15:14-33, Paul apparently sees himself serving in a priestly role before God on behalf of the gentiles.<sup>19</sup> In the opening sentence, he boldly states that he has been "set apart" for the gospel, 1:1, and in his thanksgiving section, he calls on God as his witness to assure the believers of his spiritual duty: "For God is my witness, the one whom I *serve* [λατρεύω] with my whole spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing, I remember you in my prayers at all times" (1:9). The words "set apart" (ἀφορίζω) and "serve" (λατρεύω) are commonly used in worship contexts in the Greek Old Testament.<sup>20</sup> Writing to a congregation he knows but has not visited, Paul communicates his desire to see them in person for the purpose of giving them a "spiritual" gift, one that accords mutual edification and humility. But even more directly than these liturgical references in his opening statements, Paul explicitly expresses his role in the concluding passages of his letter (15:15-16):

. . . grace was given to me to be a servant of Jesus Christ unto the nations, in the priestly service of proclaiming the gospel of God in order that the Gentiles might become an acceptable sacrifice, being sanctified by the Spirit.

19. Daniel J-S Chae labels the personal concluding remarks as written under Paul's "apostolic self-awareness," and what is significant concerning this discussion is Chae's emphasis on the coherence between 1:1-15 and 15:14-21; *Paul as Apostle to the Gentiles* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2007), 21f. Furthermore, "priestly" is a better translation than "minister" for it connotes Old Testament tabernacle or temple service; thus, the first-century context is communicated more clearly. Chae's attention to Paul's thematic parallel in the "personal" remarks is noteworthy—1:1-7 to 15:14-2, concerning apostleship and harmony with the Old Testament; 1:8-15 to 15:22-33, concerning desire for visit; and gentile inclusion, 1:16-17 to 15:7-13. However, it is worth pointing out that the *informal* nature of 15:14-33 is distinct from the *formal* nature of the thanksgiving section, 1:7-15.

20. "Set apart" and "to serve" are particularly used in Exodus through Deuteronomy, as well as in Joshua and in Daniel. The word "serve" is also meant for priestly service in a pagan context; for example, see Epictetus, *Arrian's Discourses*, 1.2.13.

In these verses, Paul chooses Levitical terminology, such as “priestly service,” “acceptable sacrifice,” and “sanctified” to describe his role of proclamation.<sup>21</sup>

This “priestly” role is not an oversimplification of his purpose. Paul seeks to influence the attitudes of the Roman believers for spiritual service. He goes to great lengths to explain the gospel in the first three sections of his letter so that believers might make the spiritual choice of humility and not pride. After portraying God’s merciful act of atonement, 1:17—5:11; after clarifying God’s compassionate deliverance of the believer, 5:12—8:39; and after explaining God’s merciful plan for Israel, 9:1—11:36, Paul transitions into the practical admonition section of his letter with these words: “Therefore, I beseech you, brothers, by the mercies of God to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, pleasing to God, which is your spiritual service” (12:1).<sup>22</sup> The transition “therefore” and the phrase “by the mercies of God” summarize Paul’s message thus far, which reinforces his purpose in bringing about a holy sacrifice, a unified transformation of the Roman believers to humility. Paul continues in his use of priestly terminology, 12:2-3, by exhorting them to renew their minds for the purpose of knowing what the will of God is, what is good, “pleasing,” and “perfect,” so that each person does not think of himself or herself too highly.<sup>23</sup>

21. It is this imagery of priestly service unto the Lord that is prominent in Romans. Keeping this in mind along with his concern for humility among the gentiles, it is less likely that Paul seeks to write his letter mainly for apologetic reasons. But by reinforcing the foundational truths about faith—Christ’s atonement, Christ’s work in the believer, and Israel’s place in God’s plan, in addition to specific issues concerning food laws and conscience—Paul does “pre-treat” the soil for a theological climate free of legalism and pride, something he directly addresses in other letters. For interesting discussions on this issue, see Campbell, “Determining the Gospel,” 320; and James C. Miller, *The Obedience of Faith, the Eschatological People of God, and the Purpose of Romans* (Atlanta: SBL, 2000), 138f.

22. The conjunction οὖν in 12:1 refers back to the body of Paul’s letter; particularly, see Peter Cotterell and Max Turner, *Linguistics & Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1989), 190.

## Purpose

In the salutation, Paul pointedly states his aim—to evangelize Rome. First, in these opening lines, he foreshadows the gospel content of his letter. For example, in 1:2–3 Paul writes concerning prophetic Scripture and the Davidic Messiah—a topic he explains at length in 9:1—11:36. And in 1:4–5, he writes concerning the appointed Son of God and the resurrection—a topic he elaborates on concerning the life of the believer in 5:12—8:39. He then formally states his mission: “[Christ] through whom we have received grace and apostleship in obedience of faith to all nations on behalf of his name,” 1:7, a practical hint at what will follow in 12:1—15:13. Second, in his thanksgiving section, he expresses his purpose of bringing a spiritual gift to “strengthen” Roman believers and clarifies this strengthening as (a) the mutual process of building each other up in faith, and (b) a process that will bear fruit in them and in the rest of the nations. Third, he concludes his formal opening with his obligation to “evangelize” all those in Rome, 1:15. Not surprisingly, Paul’s theme for the body of his letter expresses his confidence in the gospel and its power for salvation, 1:16—to the Jew first and then the gentile.

23. For comparable examples for the noun εὐάρεστος see Rom. 14:18; Phil. 13:21; Heb. 4:18 (and in the LXX, the verb εὐαρεστέω—see Ps. 55:14 and 114:9); for τέλειος, Exod. 12:5 and Deut. 8:13, Judg. 21:4. Chae understands “equality” and “inclusion” as the main subject matters of Jew and gentiles in Christ in Romans; *Paul as Apostle*, 290. But these appear to be a contemporary projection of terms since “equality” is not a word used in the Roman text. It seems more likely that Paul is concerned with respecting God’s (1) order of election and at the same time (2) instructing the believers as to the nature of God in his severity (wrath) and kindness (mercy) in dealing with them. As Ernst Käsemann points out, justification—or salvation in the case of “all Israel”—in relation to Christ’s sacrifice, 3:21–26, is the most important theological theme; “Justification and Salvation History in the Epistle to the Romans,” in *Perspectives on Paul* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), 60–78; see also S. Kim, *The Origin of Paul’s Gospel* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1981), 357. Technically speaking, *order does not necessarily mean primacy*. Chae is quite insightful in his critical argument concerning the Jews (*Paul as Apostle*, 293–300). It might be that “self-awareness” as an apostle to the gentiles fits better within the semantic domain of Paul having the perspective of Christ, the mind of Christ.

In the sections after the body of his letter, 15:14–24 and 16:1–24,<sup>24</sup> Paul writes in a more personal, less formal tone concerning himself and his connections with the believers. This means that Paul’s objective, which he had formally introduced in the opening sections of his letter, he now communicates in specific terms concerning himself, at the end of the letter.<sup>25</sup> Here Paul reminds the believers of his personal call as a “priest” in the work of the gospel among the gentiles to offer an acceptable sacrifice, an accomplishment that has had great results.<sup>26</sup> He elaborates on his plans by letting them know that he seeks to evangelize where Christ has not been named.

Therefore, Paul’s purpose is singular: to bring about the humility of Christ in the Roman church, particularly among the gentile Christians. But because of the different people groups mentioned in 15:14–24—Macedonians and Greeks, the Christian poor in Jerusalem, Christians in Jerusalem, the Roman believers, the Jews in Jerusalem, and the unreached in Spain—his agenda involves a multipurpose

24. Romans 1:1–15 and 15:1–33 comprise a literary framework for the body of the letter. Paul is less formal in style and tone after the conclusion of the body of his letter. This difference helps the reader understand how Paul’s travel plans fit within the purpose of his letter. Paul exhorts the believers to strengthen them, but he does not do so in a flattering way so as to receive some benefit or to have some apostolic influence; contra Günter Klein, “Paul’s Purpose in Writing the Epistle to the Romans,” in *The Romans Debate*, ed. Karl P. Donfried (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1977), 29–43. Paul uses his natural diplomatic gifts but this should not be construed as manipulative. Paul exercises his authority as an apostle to the gentiles in order that they would take seriously his message in the body of the letter, see L. Ann Jarvis’s analysis in *The Purpose of Romans* (1991). See also Jeffrey A. D. Weima, “Preaching the Gospel in Rome: A Study of the Epistolary Framework of Romans,” in *Gospel in Paul: Studies on Corinthians, Galatians and Romans for Richard N. Longenecker*, eds. L. Ann Jarvis and Peter Richardson (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 362f. Even though this information concerning the framework of the letter demonstrates Paul’s mission, it is important to see that the body of Paul’s letter and its influence on the Roman believers is directly connected to his success in preaching the gospel in that region, making the body of the letter not any less important to his gospel mission than the information in his literary framework.
25. For clarity purposes, this would be something similar to a preacher finishing his theological message and, after stepping out of the pulpit, informally discussing his future plans.
26. Chae argues for the continuity of Paul’s “boldness” (15:15b–21) and self-awareness of his role as a minister to the gentiles in relation to other parts of the letter (e.g., 10:20 and 1:16); *Paul As Apostle*, 32–46. Chae also diagrams the close connection between the themes in the epistolary frames of 1:1–15 and 15:14–33; *ibid.*, 38–44.

effect. Paul makes it clear early in his letter that his aim depends on working together in faith (1:12, 17), and since the Roman believers' faith is being proclaimed throughout the known world, it is important that their faith grow without pride. In this way, the gospel will be well represented as Paul evangelizes Rome—when he is there and when he is not—and when he preaches in Spain. In other words, Paul wants fertile soil in Rome, without corrupting pride, so that a harvest of fruit can be born to the neighboring territories.<sup>27</sup> What is important to see is that Paul's discussion of his personal plans at the end of his letter—concerning the different people groups—demonstrates for the Roman believers the theological principles of the gospel that he just explained in the body of his letter, with reference to God's plan. In other words, Paul's gospel—Romans 1—11—is his strategic plan, which he expresses in behavioral terms to the church, 12:1—15:13, and which he models for them as described in his own agenda, 15:14–24.

Thus the theological content of Romans 9–11 becomes important to understanding Paul's evangelistic aim. For example, through his mission Paul actualizes the truth symbolized in the olive tree

27. Paul's letter does have an ambassadorial tone and nature to it. His connections with the church are not from founding, nor from exercising authority over it. Spain is a part of his mission that will involve the Roman believers and in the end will impact the Jews. In this sense, writing his letter to the Roman believers is a strategic goal, but Paul does not seek a recommendation letter, nor does he give indication to make Rome his base of operation. His purpose is "spiritual" (1:12, 12:1f) and the results he seeks are spiritual; thus Spain alone is not his "ultimate" goal. But there is much to say for the nature of sending a letter in the first century to serve as a type of "presence" and Paul's diplomacy is quite evident, which means the letter has "ambassadorial" qualities. For arguments that accent the "ambassadorial" nature of the letter, see Robert Jewett, "Paul, Phoebe, and the Spanish Mission," in *The Social World of Formative Christianity and Judaism*, eds. Jacob Neusner, Ernest S. Frerichs, Peder Borgen, and Richard Horsley (Philadelphia: Fortress: Fortress Press, 1988), 142–61; Jewett, "Romans as an Ambassadorial Letter," *Interpretation* 36, no. 1 (1982): 5–20; and Arthur J. Dewey, "Eis tēn Spanian: The Future of Paul," in *Religious Propaganda and Missionary Competition in the New Testament World: Essays in Honor of Dieter Georgi*, eds. Lukas Bormann, Kelly Del Tredici, and Angela Standhartinger (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 321–49. The fact that Paul mentions Spain at the end of his letter does not minimize his emphasis. Evangelizing Rome, Spain, and the resulting effects to the Jews are closely related.

metaphor. His outreach to the world will bring about salvation to the disobedient Jews, for whom he continually grieves. After expressing confidence in the church's ability to instruct one another, and after reminding them of his priestly role, 15:14-16, he informs them of his success in preaching and living out the gospel in Macedonia and Greece. This accomplishment in Christ brings him to seek new territory where Christ has not been named—currently Spain, 11:24. He quotes Isaiah 52:15 (Rom. 15:21) to show that his work among the gentiles is a fulfillment of God's design. This response from the gentiles (as understood in light of Paul's arguments in 9-11) will cause jealousy, a catalyst for the future return of Israel. Paul warns the gentiles not to make the mistake of being prideful in their position after having being "grafted in," lest they incur the severity of God, too, 11:18-22. This is why in his final remarks, 15:24, Paul clarifies his expectation for the Roman believers to *help him* on his "way through" (διαπορευόμεναι) to Spain—a sign of humility on their part—only after he enjoys their company *for some time* (ἄπὸ μέρους).<sup>28</sup>

Furthermore, in addition to his long-range plans, Paul communicates his immediate plans to travel to Jerusalem in service of the saints. He will bring an offering from the gentile Christians to the "poor" Jewish Christians in Jerusalem as a physical demonstration of the gospel. This sacrificial act from the gentile Christians (1) shows respect for God's order of election ("to the Jew first") and (2) affirms acceptance of God's plan for the Jews in the re-grafting of the "natural olive branches" (11:11f). Paul describes this "fruitful gift" from the gentile Christians as one of obligation, for the gentile Christians now share in the spiritual blessings of the Jews, 15:27-28: "For if they [the Gentiles in Macedonia and Greece] share in the spiritual blessings of the nations, then they owe it to serve in their

28. It is possible that the use of "some" ("part") hints at a "full" result—see chapter 4.

earthly needs.” In keeping with the meaning of the olive tree metaphor, the engrafted branches—the gentile Christians—share in the nourishment of the root, thus they should support the natural branches—the Jewish Christians—that have been regrafted.

The connection between the olive tree metaphor, 11:16-24 and Paul’s missiological purpose in writing his letter can further be demonstrated by the shared imagery in his informal remarks at the end of his letter, 15:30-32. Paul encourages the Roman believers with a word of blessing and request: he encourages them to “strive together” in prayer for his deliverance from the “disobedient” in Judah—a parallel reference to the “enemies” of the gospel, 11:28—and he encourages them to pray that his service in Jerusalem will be acceptable to the saints—a parallel reference to God’s election, the “beloved on account of the patriarchs,” 11:28. Thus Paul serves in a priestly role as a humble servant to fulfill God’s plan, to enlist the sacrificial minds and actions of the Roman believers.<sup>29</sup>

### Audience

While Paul has not visited the Roman congregation, he does know quite a few of the believers who meet in the house churches, 16:1-23.<sup>30</sup> Part of the reason that the Letter to the Romans is more formal in topic and style than his other letters probably has more to do with his not having visited them. But it is also important to keep

29. See Karris, “Romans 14:1–15:13”, 155–78. Again, notice Paul’s choice of liturgical terms: “service” (ἡ διακονία) in Jerusalem and “acceptable” (εὐπρόσδεκτος) to the saints.

30. The textual evidence shows that some ancient manuscripts lack the address to the Roman church (1:7, 15); some manuscripts leave out chapter 15 or 16 or both; and some place the final doxology, 16:25-27, in different places such as at the end of chapter 14, at the end of 15. But those offering speculative hypotheses for a shorter version of Romans offer no substantive evidence. Accepting the integrity of the letter and accepting its author as Paul gives reason for its content and meaning to be trusted and received. Only in recent years has Pauline authorship been questioned, and such arguments lack credible support. The weight of textual evidence, the thematic and tightly knit arguments in Romans, and the letter’s style demonstrate Pauline authorship.

in mind that he does not “instruct” them as if they were immature believers or new converts. The congregation is healthy. He explains and reminds them based on the grace given to him, 15:15; he is convinced that they are full of all goodness and knowledge with the ability to instruct each other, 15:14, and their obedience to Christ is well known and their faith is proclaimed to the world, 1:8 and 16:9. While Paul is aware of and does speak to an internal issue, the attributes of the church do not point to a division or an egregious problem.

Paul planned to visit the believers in Rome at different times but was hindered. He sees this delay as part of God’s plan, an opportunity to see a “harvest of fruit” among them. Paul wants to continue his partnership with them, soon and in person, 1:13-15.

Paul writes to both Jewish and gentile believers, yet it seems that the majority (the “target” group for the letter) are gentile Christians. He addresses them directly, 11:13-24, and informs them of his calling to reach the gentiles in Rome and in unreached territories—1:5-6, 13, 15:14-21. On the other hand, his use of midrash and Old Testament support, his focus on the law—6:14, 7:1, 7:4, 9:30—10:3—and his address to “all” those beloved of God in Rome, indicate a Jewish Christian readership as well.<sup>31</sup>

Historical information leads to a similar conclusion. Three primary sources give brief accounts about the situation in Rome before the time of Paul’s writing his letter: the Roman historians Suetonius and

31. For the argument of an exclusive gentile audience, see the following works: Stendahl, *Paul among Jews and Gentiles*; Stowers, *Rereading of Romans*; Elliott, *The Rhetoric of Romans: Argumentative Constraint and Strategy and Paul’s Dialogue with Judaism* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1990); and Das, *Solving the Romans Debate*. For the view of Paul writing to an “encoded” gentile audience, see Nanos, *The Mystery of Romans: The Jewish Context of Paul’s Letter* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996). While it makes sense that Paul writes to gentile Christians, the idea of a letter to the Roman believers that would not include Jewish Christians is a logical “all gentile/no Jewish Christian” fallacy. However, the emphasis on gentile believers as the primary audience makes sense.

Dio Cassius, and the Christian author Luke.<sup>32</sup> In the early second century CE, Suetonius records the account of Claudius's decision to expel the Jews from Rome in 49 ce: "Since the Jews constantly made disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus, he [Claudius] expelled them from Rome." The assumption is that "Chrestus" was misspelled in Latin and refers to "Christians." This record aligns with Luke's account (Acts 18:1-2) of Paul's meeting a Jew in Corinth named Aquila "who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla because Claudius had ordered all the Jews to leave Rome." However, in the early third century BCE, Dio Cassius writes about Claudius's order in this way: "As for the Jews, who had again increased so greatly that by reason of their multitude it would have been hard without raising tumult to bar them from the city, he did not drive them out, but ordered them, while continuing their traditional mode of life, not to hold meetings."<sup>33</sup>

Luke's account of Paul's arrival in Rome records a somewhat significant and autonomous Jewish population in Rome. Luke writes about Christian brothers inviting Paul to stay with them in Rome, even though he is guarded by a soldier. Three days after his arrival, Paul calls together the Jewish leaders in Rome to explain why he is in chains, and while they know about the Christian sect, they seemingly do not have firsthand experience with them. The Jewish leader's reply (Acts 28:21-22): "We have not received any letters from Judea concerning you, nor have any of the brothers from there communicated anything bad about you. We consider what you think to be worthwhile and want to listen to you, for we know that everywhere people are speaking against this sect."

32. See Suetonius's work on the *Life of the Caesars*, 25.3; *Dio Cassius*, 60.6.6-7; Acts 18:2 and 28:21-22.

33. For a helpful and succinct list of the different views, see Johann Kim, *God, Israel, and the Gentiles*, 50-56. All translations are the author's unless otherwise stated.

Taking into consideration the accounts of Luke and Suetonius, there was an expulsion, but it is not certain whether it was due to Christians. An expulsion would mean a temporary exodus of the Jews from the city of Rome. But at the time of Paul's letter, there was a reasonable sized population of Jews. These Jews were not in close contact with Judea about Paul's situation. And the lack of personal conflict with the Christian brothers suggests that the synagogues did not encounter the Christian message or much opposition.

Thus, based on the literary and historical evidence, it seems that Paul writes to both Jewish and gentile Christians meeting in house churches, 16:1–23, with the main purpose of bringing about humility among the gentile Christians. For gentile Christians to receive such a direct address concerning the temptation to become prideful (11:17f), it would mean they were in a position that warrants such an admonition—in the majority.

Finally, it might be helpful to see Paul as writing on two levels. On one level, he writes to believers about a specific situation. In other words, the first eleven chapters prepare the theological foundation for the practical admonitions concerning the “weak” and “strong” issue in chapters 14 and 15. Here Paul applies the “full weight” of the gospel so that the Roman believers choose humility—since arrogance would limit the gospel impact in Rome and likely, in turn, the world. As a missionary, it is reasonable that he would be concerned.

On another level, Paul writes in a *formal* manner to a church he does not know “well.” He has not visited them, and he expects that his letter will circulate among the house churches. The recipients live at the center of the empire during a time when Rome is in the midst of a cultural revival—in literature, art, philosophy, and law. It makes sense, then, that as an apostle who is called to preach to all peoples and “kings,” he would take time to pen a didactic letter with lasting theological significance. In this light, Paul's unique, formal style has

a specific, continual purpose: to combat pride for a missiological end, revealing the heart and mind of God.