

Christ and he longed to see them face to face.

After a brief introduction, Paul presents the facts of the Gospel (1:3), and declares his allegiance to it (1:16, 17). He continues by building an airtight case for the lostness of humanity and the necessity for God's intervention (Romans 1:18 - 3:20).

Then Paul presents the Good News: Salvation is available to all, regardless of a person's identity, sin or heritage. We are saved by grace (unearned and undeserved favour from God) through faith (complete trust) in Christ and his finished work. Through him we stand before God justified (not guilty) (3:21 - 5:21). With this foundation Paul moves directly into a discussion of the freedom that comes from being saved - freedom from the power of sin (6:1 - 23) freedom from the domination of the law (7:25) freedom to become like Christ and discover God's limitless love (8:1 - 39).

Speaking directly to his Jewish brothers and sisters, Paul shares his concern for them and explains how they fit into God's plan (9:1-11:12). God has made the way for Jews and Gentiles to be united in the body of Christ, both groups can praise God for His wisdom and love (11:13 - 36).

Paul explains what it means to live in complete submission to Christ, to use spiritual gifts to serve others (12: 3 - 8) genuinely love others (12:9 - 21) and be good citizens (13 1- 14). Freedom must be guided by love as we build each other up in the faith, being sensitive and helpful to those who are weak (14:1 - 15:4) Paul stresses unity, especially between Jews and Gentiles (15: 5- 13). He concludes by reviewing his reasons for writing, outlining his personal plans (15:22-33) greeting his friends, and giving a few final thoughts and greetings from his travelling companions (16:1-27).

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# **Fleet Methodist Church**

## **365**

### **Bible Reading Challenge**

#### **WHAT IS IN THE BIBLE READINGS FOR APRIL?**

##### **CHRONICLES**

1 & 2 Chronicles were probably written by Ezra between 450 and 425BC; they started out as one book.

##### **1 Chronicles**

1 Chronicles begins with an extensive genealogy and for nine chapters the writer gives us a 'who's who' of Israel's history from Adam onwards with special emphasis on David's royal line.

The rest of 1 Chronicles tells the story of David, who laid out plans for the construction of and worship in the temple. It was written after the exile to help those returning to Israel understand how to worship God. Ezra is selective in his history telling; he carefully weaves the narrative, highlighting spiritual lessons and teaching moral truths. The Northern Kingdom is virtually ignored and he focuses instead on the history of the Southern Kingdom, the tribes of Judah, Benjamin and Levi. These tribes tended to be more faithful to God.

David's triumphs and not his sins are recalled and the Temple is given great prominence as the vital centre of national life.

*Key verse: "And David realized that the Lord had confirmed him as king over Israel and had greatly blessed his kingdom for the sake of his people Israel" (14:2)*

## 2 Chronicles

In 2 Chronicles David's son Solomon is inaugurated as king; God offers Solomon anything that he wants and he amazingly asks for wisdom and knowledge to complete the task God had assigned him to and do it well. The lesson for us is that God has given each of us a commission to fulfil and the greatest blessing we can seek from God is the ability to carry out his will for our lives. For that, like Solomon we need to pray for wisdom. Solomon builds the magnificent Temple in Jerusalem, thus fulfilling his father's wish and last request. He enjoyed a peaceful and prosperous reign of forty years. After Solomon died his son, Rehobeam assumed the throne and his immaturity divided the kingdom.

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Thanks to Chris Sumner (See 2Chronicles 1)

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SOLOMON'S WISDOM PUT TO THE TEST

2 Chronicles records the history of the Southern Kingdom from the reign of Solomon to the end of the Babylonian exile. The decline of Judah is disappointing but emphasis is given to the spiritual reformers who zealously sought to turn people back to God. Goodness is stressed and little is said about the "bad" kings or the failures of the "good" kings. The Northern Kingdom is again rarely mentioned because of her false worship and refusal to acknowledge the Temple of Jerusalem. 2 Chronicles concludes with the final destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple.

*Key Verse: "Then if my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, I will hear from heaven and forgive their sins and restore their land" (7:14)*

## ROMANS

Romans was written by Paul to the Christians in Rome who were "loved by God and called to be saints" (Rom 1:7). Because Paul was a Roman Citizen he had a unique passion for them. The letter was written by him as an introduction and to give them a sample of his message before he visited them. Unfortunately he never made it, he planned to visit Rome on the way to Spain after first taking a collection to Jerusalem for the poor Christians there. Unfortunately he was arrested in Jerusalem and eventually went to Rome as a prisoner. Phoebe, who was a member of the church at Cenchrea near Corinth (Rom 16:1) most likely carried the letter to Rome.

Paul wrote Romans as an organised and carefully presented statement of his faith. He was intelligent, articulate and committed to his calling. Like a skilled lawyer, he presented the case for the Gospel clearly and forthrightly.

Although many barriers separated them, Paul felt a bond with these believers. They were his brothers and sisters in