There are only two things you are taking to heaven - your character and converts.
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INTRODUCTION TO ROMANS
Prayer Study #440
First Love Ministries of Perry, Georgia USA

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, 'The just shall live by faith.'"
Romans 1:16-17

Sources Used for this Study:
The Open Bible: New King James Version
The New Daily Study Bible: The Letter to the Romans by William Barclay (1907-1978)
The Epistle to the Romans: A Commentary by Kevin Conner
Sparkling Gems from the Greek by Rick Renner
Adventuring Through the Bible by Ray C. Stedman
The Bible Knowledge Commentary New Testament edited by John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck
Through the Bible Volume IV by J. Vernon McGee (1904-1988)
Erdman's *Handbook to the Bible* edited by David and Patricia Alexander
The Reese Chronological Bible by Edward Reese
And miscellaneous other sources

Genre: A Letter or Epistle
On the plus side: Letters can be one of the most deeply personal types of writing. The letters or epistles of Paul revealing his character, his heart and mind, his love for those he was ministering to, his struggles to correct some of the problems of the early Church. In addition, much of Paul's letters were almost autobiographical leaving us with more knowledge about the Apostle Paul's life than just about anyone in the New Testament besides the Lord Jesus Himself. Paul wrote these letters, not as a theologian or academic person, but as a friend writing to friends.

On the negative side: A letter is like a dialogue. Since only the letters *from* Paul have survived (and not all of them) and no letters *to* Paul have survived, we are getting only one side of the conversation.

Paul's letters, like most of the letters of that day, generally followed a specific pattern:

1. Greeting (ex. 1st Corinthians 1:1-2: *Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother, to the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours;*)
2. Prayer where Paul prays for the grace of God on the people he is writing (ex. Galatians 1:3: *Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ…*)
3. The Thanksgiving (ex. Philippians 1:3: *I thank my God upon every remembrance of you…*)
4. The special contents or Body of the letter
5. Special personal greetings (ex. 1st Thessalonians 5:26: *Greet all the brethren with a holy kiss.*)

Other Characteristics of this particular Pauline Epistle: Paul uses a question and answer format for Romans. He emphasizes that the Good News of Jesus Christ is not just facts to be believed but also a life of righteousness befitting the person who has been justified by faith. And while the Gospels present the words and works of Jesus, Paul writes in Romans about the significance of Jesus' sacrificial death. Romans is considered by many as the greatest of the 13 Pauline Epistles. It is not to be read just as a book about Christian theology, although it is the most systematic presentation of Christian doctrine in the Bible, but also should be read as a book of practical application. It is first of the New Testament Epistles not because it was written first (it was not), but because it is the foundational book on which all of the other epistles rest. It develops the theme of salvation in three tenses:

- Past-*I was saved when I believed in Jesus;*
- Present-*I am being saved as the character of Jesus Christ now becomes manifest in my life;*
- Future-*I shall be saved when at last, in resurrection life, with a glorified body, I stand in the presence of the Son of God and enter into the fullness of the truth of God.*

Another way we can look at this is my spirit was 100% saved when I believed in Jesus, my soul (mind, will and emotions) is being saved as the character of Jesus Christ becomes manifest in my life (we are working out our own soulish salvation daily with fear and trembling-Phil. 2:12), and going from glory to glory, and my body shall be saved at last, in resurrection life, with a glorified body, as I stand in the presence of the Son of God.

And these three stages can be compared to Justification, Sanctification, and Glorification.

Author: There is little doubt among scholars that this letter was spoken by the Apostle Paul to a secretary named Tertius (Romans 16:22), who wrote as Paul spoke and who was allowed to include his own greeting. Some scholars believe that Chapter 16 was not supposed to be part of the book and may have been taken from another of the Pauline epistles and attached to the end of Romans, since Paul greets twenty-six people by name in a church and city that he has never visited. He follows this pattern of greeting several people in only one other of his letters, and that is the book of Colossians, another church he had never visited. What is probably happening here is Paul is listing people he met in the other cities of his missionary journeys that the Romans would have known or who had returned to Rome to be part of the church there. Thus, the Roman Christians would know he and they had mutual friends and thus would be more accepting of him and receive his message, even though he had never visited their church.

Paul was uniquely qualified to communicate the Gospel across racial and cultural barriers. He was a Jew born as a Roman citizen in Tarsus who spoke Greek and who had become a Christian.

Timothy and Gaius were with Paul when he wrote Romans (Romans 16:21). Historical evidence points to Paul's birth sometimes between 5 BC and 5 AD, putting him as a contemporary of Jesus, although there is no evidence that Paul actually saw or met Jesus prior to Paul's experience on the Damascus Road.

The Time: Paul wrote this letter near the end of his third missionary journey in AD 57 (Acts 18:23-21:14, Romans 15:19). It was written during Paul's three-month stay in Corinth. He had taken money up for the church at Jerusalem and was ready to go to Jerusalem to give them this collection. He was warned, however, of a plot by the Jews to kill him so he fooled them by first going north to Philippi. He evidently gave this letter to Phoebe from a church near Corinth, and she carried it to Rome (Romans 16:1-2). Unknown to Paul was the fact that he himself would soon be in Rome as a prisoner. He entered Rome about AD 58 as a prisoner.

We must be reminded that the New Testament Church grew-up in a pagan environment. With a heart full of grace, Paul was writing during this time to bring correction to some of the churches and to encourage them that even though the world was corrupt and evil, nevertheless Christ had brought a new era with a new morality. These believers were not to be the same as the pagan world but were new creations, who were to walk in God's law of love.

The New Testament Epistles: The New Testament Epistles can be divided into three groups:

1. Romans, 1st and 2nd Corinthians, and Galatians-The theme of this first group is ***Christ in you*** (although that phrase is found in Colossians 1:27).
2. Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1st and 2nd Thessalonians, 1st and 2nd Timothy, Titus and Philemon-The theme of these letters is ***You in Christ*** emphasizing the importance of relationship with the rest of the Body of Christ.
3. Hebrews, James, 1st and 2nd Peter, 1st through 3rd John, and Jude have as their theme ***How to walk by faith***.

Order in which the Epistles were written:

1st Thessalonians (written from Corinth) AD 51 *Christ's Return*
2nd Thessalonians (written from Corinth) AD 51-53 *Day of the Lord*
1st Corinthians (written from Ephesus) AD 54-56 *Christian Conduct*
2nd Corinthians (written from Macedonia) AD 57 *Paul's Authority*
Galatians (written from Corinth) AD 57-58 (may have been written earlier sometimes between AD 49-52) *Salvation by Grace*
Romans (written from Corinth) AD 57-58 *Gospel of God*
Colossians (written from a Roman prison) AD 60-61 Christ's Pre-eminence
Philemon (written from a Roman prison) AD 61-63
Ephesians (written from a Roman prison) AD 63 *The Church, Christ's Body*
Philippians (written from a Roman prison) AD 63 *Christian Experience*
1st Timothy (written from a Roman prison) AD 64 *Church Order*
Titus (written from a Roman prison) AD 64
Hebrews (There is dispute over whether Paul wrote this letter or not.) AD 65 *Priesthood of Christ*
2nd Timothy AD 67 (probably the last letter written by Paul) *Holding the Truth*

Non-Pauline Epistles

James AD 45-50 *Practical Christian Living*
Philemon AD 60 *Love Exemplified*
1st Peter around AD 64-65 *Suffering and Glory*
2nd Peter AD 66-67 *Last Days*
Jude AD 67 AD 68 *Contending for the Faith*
Titus AD 65-70 *Church Order*
1st John AD 90-95 Fellowship & Love
2nd John AD 90-95 *Christ Commandment*
3rd John AD 95 *Waking in Truth*
(John wrote his Gospel in AD 95 and Revelation in AD 96

The City of Rome and the Christian Church: Roman at this time was the greatest city in the world. There were between one to four million people living in the city. It was full of magnificent buildings, but the majority of the people were slaves. The Church at Rome was well known and had many members. It is thought that they met in different places and did not have one specific church meeting place. Contrary to popular opinion, there is no evidence that Peter founded the Church at Rome. Paul also did not establish the Roman church. Most likely Christians from the churches established by Paul in Asia Minor and Greece moved to Rome. Also Roman Jews who were visiting Jerusalem and had become followers of Christ on the Day of Pentecost had returned home to Rome and started churches in the city. We might never know where all of these believers came from, but we do know from historical records that the Church at Rome was large. For example, the historian Tacitus wrote that the Christians, persecuted under Nero in AD 64, were "an immense multitude."

Like Babylon, the city of Rome became a symbol of idolatry in the New Testament. Some believe Chapters 17 and 18 of Revelation are prophetic words predicting the fall of Rome.

The biggest opposition to the Christian Church in Rome and elsewhere had come from the Jewish community of believers. The devil, however, retched-up the persecution against both groups. In 64 AD much of Rome was destroyed or damaged by a great fire. Most believe this fire was started by the order of Nero himself. Nero wanted to rebuild part of the city. The Roman Senate would not approve this building program because of the expense. Nero was incensed that the Senate did not go along with him. He had the city set on fire so that they would have to rebuild. In order to keep the blame from coming on himself, he blamed the Christians. They were an easy scapegoat because some of their practices were weird to these pagans, who did not understand the Christian walk. After all, their Founder had been accused of treasonable activity against the Emperor. Besides, the Christians were not liked by the general population, who saw them as a lower class. Thus begin the first persecution of Christians in the Roman Empire organized by the government itself. This was to continue for many years, and unfortunately Nero was not the worst of the persecutors, although he had Christians soaked with oil, put on spikes, and set afire to light his garden parties and use them in the games for wild animals to maul and eat. He also had Paul and Peter put to death.

The Book Itself: One of the central doctrines of the book of Romans is Justification. We are justified by faith, not by our works. This means that the Blood of Jesus, which we receive by faith, changes us from vile sinners, whose own righteousness is filthy rags. Because of the blood accepted by the believer by faith, the people of God who can have relationship with this holy God who will look on us as justified, or *just as if we had never*

sinned, when we come into genuine relationship with Jesus. This doctrine of justification by faith is the spark that started the Protestant Reformation. The doctrine of Justification is not just a New Testament doctrine. This doctrine initially comes from the Old Testament book of Habakkuk. Verse 2:4 of Habakkuk contains the phrase, *"the just shall live by faith."* Paul, who knew the Old Testament like few men have ever know it, took the revelation of this verse and wrote three epistles based on this one verse:

The Just (Romans 1:17)
Shall Live (Galatians 3:11)
By Faith (Hebrews 10:38) (Many do not believe Paul wrote Hebrews.)

The book also heavily emphasizes the Righteousness of God, the benefits of righteousness in a believer's life, Israel's rejection of Christ-a rejection which Paul shows us is not total or final and had the purpose of opening the way to the Gentiles to come into relationship with Jesus, sanctification, the power of the Spirit in a believer's life, and love of God.

Many great Christians have testified about how the book of Romans changed their lives, firing them up for the work of the Kingdom. These include men such as Augustine, Luther, Bunyan, and Wesley.

Recipients of the Letter to the Romans: Paul did not write this letter to the Church at Rome. Instead, he addresses the letter *"to all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints"* (Romans 1:7). We believe that there were several churches in Rome at this time. Paul did send specific greetings, however, to one of these churches-the church that met in the home of Aquila and Priscilla (Romans 16:5). The Roman Church was made up of both Messianic Jews and Gentiles converts.