



Romans 1:7

“To all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be his holy people. Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.”

There are 21 Letter Books in the Bible. Sometimes we call them “Epistles” (which is a fancy word for letters). A lot of them were written by St. Paul.

These letters were written to remind new Churches and new Christians what God and Jesus expected from them. This was almost two thousand years ago. But the messages in these letters are still important. The Letters are full of advice about how we should still live as groups of Christians.

The first of the Letters in the Bible is a letter from St. Paul to the Church in Rome, a letter to the Romans. The Church in Rome was having a problem. The disagreement was about whether new Christians should have to follow all of the Jewish traditions. Now, we know that Jesus grew up in a Jewish home. So did the other Apostles in Jesus’ time, and so did St. Paul.

By now there are more and more new Christians who grew up in other traditions, maybe where they believed in a bunch of gods, like the Greeks, or maybe no god at all. But now they all believe in Jesus and in his Father, the One God of Abraham. That doesn’t mean they have to follow every one of the Jewish rules.

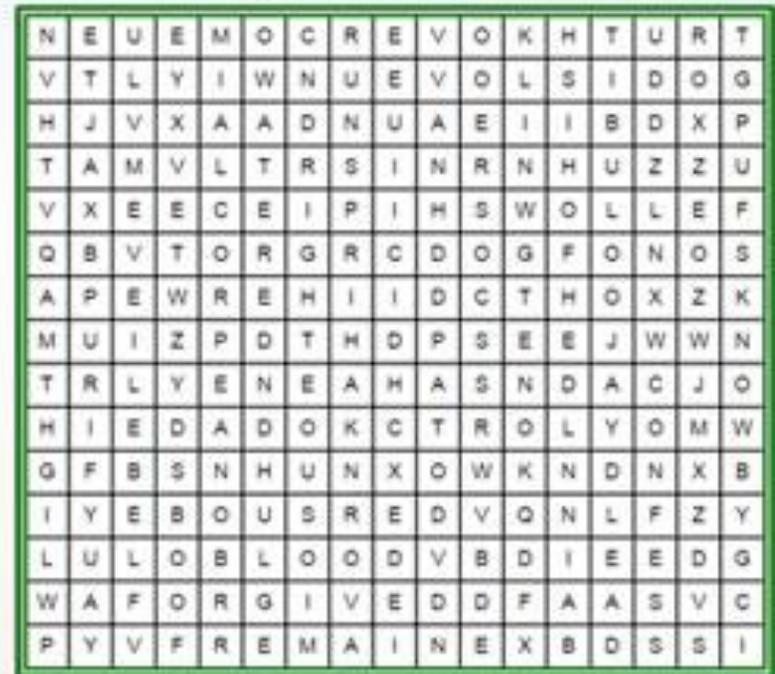
St. Paul visits Rome and teaches that the important thing is to follow the Good News of Jesus, whatever your traditions were before. Now there would be new traditions. There would be baptism and praying together and loving each other. All of the Christians became part of the God of Abraham family through Jesus.

But when Paul leaves Rome to visit other places, it is easy for the Roman Christians to disagree with each other again. So, Paul writes them this long letter to help them remember what is important. Paul wrote that the Church should be like an olive tree with many branches. Some of these branches would come from other trees. The olive tree would be opened, and these new branches would grow right into the tree. Other branches might have always been part of the tree. Maybe some branches would fall off, because they didn’t want to be part of it anymore. The Olive Tree would welcome and nourish all the branches.

The Church would support all Christians with new traditions and with the Holy Spirit. They would be united through the Good News of Jesus and grow together.

Even now, Christian Churches don’t agree on everything. But the Letters in the Bible remind us that we are united through the Good News of Jesus and that God expects us to love one another and to grow together in the Holy Spirit.

## The Epistles of John



Life  
Proclaim  
Fellowship  
Light  
Darkness  
Walk  
Purify  
Sin

Confess  
Forgive  
Advocate  
Know  
Obey  
Overcome  
Truth  
Son of God

Antichrist  
Righteous  
Remain  
Spirit  
God is Love  
Believe  
Water  
Blood

