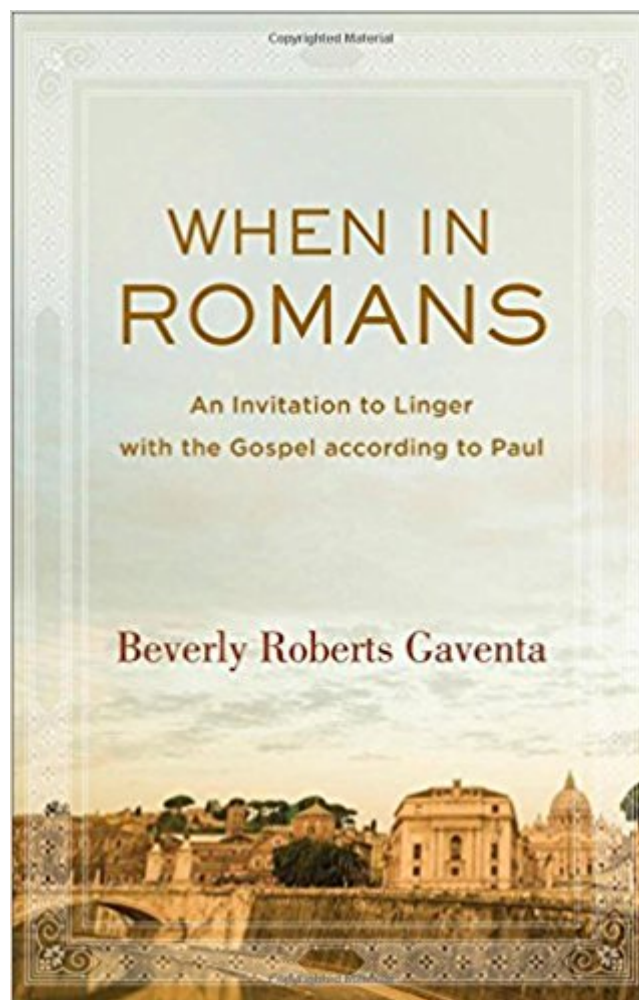




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# **When In Romans: An Invitation To Linger With The Gospel According To Paul (Theological Explorations For The Church Catholic)**



## Synopsis

Invites Readers of Romans to Expand Their View of God and the Gospel When reading the book of Romans, we often focus on the quotable passages, making brief stopovers and not staying long enough to grasp some of the big ideas it contains. Instead of raiding Paul's most famous letter for a passage here or a theme there, leading New Testament scholar Beverly Roberts Gaventa invites us to linger in Romans. She asks that we stay with the letter long enough to see how Romans reframes our tidy categories and dramatically enlarges our sense of the gospel. Containing profound insights written in accessible prose and illuminating references to contemporary culture, this engaging book explores the cosmic dimensions of the gospel that we read about in Paul's letter. Gaventa focuses on four key issues in Romans--salvation, identity, ethics, and community--that are crucial both for the first century and for our own. As she helps us navigate the book of Romans, she shows that the gospel is far larger, wilder, and more unsettling than we generally imagine it to be.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

When reading the book of Romans, we often focus on the quotable passages, not staying long enough to grasp some of the big ideas it contains. Beverly Roberts Gaventa invites us to linger in Romans so we can see how Paul's most famous letter reframes our tidy categories and dramatically enlarges our sense of the gospel. "Anyone who has difficulty imagining that a book on Paul's Epistle to the Romans could be a 'page-turner' should read this one. Beverly Roberts Gaventa's prose is

compelling, her insights on Romans are startlingly original, and her ability to show us in Paul's letter 'the gospel in its vastness' is simply breathtaking. This book is to be savored."--Thomas G. Long, Candler School of Theology, Emory University

"There are many books on Romans, but none quite like this one. Steeped in learning but accessible to a broad spectrum of readers, written with pastoral insight and welcome flashes of humor, here is a gift to Christians and inquirers alike. Gaventa invites us to enter the grand metropolis that is Romans, wander in its streets, relish its conversations, and be made new by its radical Lord."--Susan Grove Eastman, Duke Divinity School

"Beverly Gaventa has produced that rarest of books, combining careful, exquisite scholarship with her eye for humanizing, delightful detail. Her writing is both sophisticated and accessible as she tackles Paul's complex notions of individual and cosmic salvation. I am one of those Gaventa identifies who, more frequently than I like to admit, opted for the Gospel reading rather than grappling with Paul's sometimes tortured logic. Looking back, I would have loved turning to *When in Romans*."--John M. Buchanan, former editor and publisher, *The Christian Century*

"This is a book the church has long needed. Professor Gaventa pulls back the thin veneer of familiarity to introduce us to the high drama in Paul's Letter to the Romans. Her writing is both scholarly and accessible, ancient and contemporary, theological and pastoral."--M. Craig Barnes, Princeton Theological Seminary

"No one makes Romans come alive quite like Beverly Gaventa. In this highly accessible but provocative book--aimed at a wide Christian audience--she challenges our domesticated construals of Paul's gospel with a vision of God's comprehensive saving agency. If the starting point and the primary subject matter of the letter is not us but God, we are suddenly liberated from our excessive anxieties about ourselves, the church, and 'ethics.' Here are 3-D lenses to see Romans, the gospel, and the reality of God's grace, power, and mystery in a new and exciting way."--John M. & G. Barclay, Durham University

"From the beginning of the Christian era until the present day, Paul's Letter to the Romans has been the source of revolutionary rethinking. Nowhere do we come closer to the radical heart of the gospel. The universal and cosmic notes of the Pauline symphony are sounded in this book by one of our most esteemed interpreters of the apostle's letters. Beverly Gaventa has written a book for ordinary parish clergy and laypeople that is fun to read and full of spicy references to popular culture, and that will jolt readers into a new appreciation for the great apostle and his unique place in the history of Christian theology."--Fleming Rutledge, author of *Not Ashamed of the Gospel: Sermons on Romans and The Crucifixion: Understanding the Death of Jesus Christ*

"Using contemporary cultural illustrations from sources as varied as Terrence Malick's *The Tree of Life* and Bruce Springsteen's 'Land of Hope and Dreams,'

Beverly Roberts Gaventa delightfully clarifies Paul's complex message in Romans. In beautifully written prose that is as compellingly clear for the novice as it is exegetically convincing for the scholar, Gaventa reminds us of the cosmic, liberative power of Paul's message. Here is that book of uncommon quality: easily accessible and utterly indispensable. Reading Romans today? Start here."--Brian Blount, Union Presbyterian Seminary

"When in Romans is deceptively accessible and lighthearted, so that readers are not immediately aware of being drawn into deep and rewarding engagement with Paul's complex text. But once inside and grappling with its intricacies, they are led securely through by Beverly Gaventa's experienced and unfailing judgment."--Carolyn Osiek, RSCJ, Brite Divinity School

I was delightfully surprised by the fresh insights of deep significance that Gaventa uncovers in the book of Romans, of all things--that book about which so, so much has already been written. She helps the reader approach the letter's themes as if one were reading it for the first time with 1st-century lenses, and in the process expands and reorients the reader's understanding of salvation, and the question of why Paul is even writing in the first place. The 21st-century repercussions of what Gaventa presents here would take another volume, but she does at points connect some of these dots herself. One notable reason why Gaventa's reading seems so fresh is that while it touches on them very briefly, but doesn't dwell on so many of the recurrent topics in recent discussions on Paul, such as "faith/fulness of Christ" or "works of the law" or "righteousness/justice of God." She simply helps focus attention on what to keep in mind when reading Romans in order to understand what is happening in and through its complex arguments. And I couldn't put it down until I finished. Although I would otherwise say we need another Romans commentary like we need rocks in our shoes, it offers much promise that Gaventa's big commentary which she is producing might very well revolutionize our understanding of aspects of Romans, and perhaps even Paul in general. At the very least, if it expands on what she has already given us in this slim volume, it will absolutely reenergize our engagement with this part of the New Testament.

This is exactly the book on Romans I needed to read as a relatively new (Lutheran) preacher seeking to engage the Romans lectionaries readings in sermons as well as begin a deeper dive into this epistle as part of both personal and professional bible study. I appreciate the refreshing tone and style of this book as well as the content.

Brilliant exploration of this very difficult letter. Whether or not you agree with her treatment of key

themes, the insights give much to ponder. Her explanation of what Paul was doing in the very difficult (for me) Jew-Gentile passages is terrifically illuminating. I am so glad to have read this book.

This modern easy and easy to read look at Romans considers all the pit falls for the occasional visitor to Romans. It goes a long way in revealing the real Paul as apposed to the perceived Paul.

A comprehensive study chocked full of in-depth investigations of the book of Romans.

Dr. Beverly Gaventa, professor of New Testament at Baylor University, has written a new, fresh, and challenging perspective on Paul's letter to the Romans. Some might wonder why one would write a new book on Romans. Many commentaries and Bible studies are devoted to the letter. However, this book is neither a commentary nor a Bible study; though your study of Romans for a sermon or group setting would benefit greatly from this book. In "When in Romans", I appreciate Dr. Gaventa's wherewithal to note the readers' education level. She is not, by any standard, attempting to insult one's intelligence. Rather, she writes profoundly enough to engage a wider audience. As she states in the preface, "Romans is too important to be turned over to a group of specialists" (xiii). Her writing style lends itself to engage readers of all levels as good authors should. Dr. Gaventa also challenges typical, preconceived conclusions students (and maybe pastors, too) bring to the letter. She discusses the argument for Phoebe bringing the letter to Rome and concludes that Paul had a close relationship with Phoebe. This is key in contemporary discussions on women's roles in ministry. Also discussed is the notion of salvation. Dr. Gaventa discusses the matter of salvation encompasses all of the cosmos, not simply humanity (since God created everything in the cosmos). If salvation is broadly defined in whom it encompasses, there is cause for arguing the depth and breadth of the Gospel and taking seriously the word "all" when Paul uses it. In the discussion of salvation, Dr. Gaventa also mentions Abraham and Abraham's obedience. Dr. Gaventa provides a new perspective on the idea that Abraham simply believed. She argues that we know clearly Abraham also obeyed God because of his faith. This influences the non-traditional perspective of Romans 9-11 in Protestant circles (i.e., the doctrine of God's sovereign election). Dr. Gaventa's "When in Romans" should be a book you want to use in any discussion on Romans. It belongs on the shelf with the Johnson's "Discovering Romans" Bible Study and in companion with F.F. Bruce's IVPNT Commentary on Romans or Gordon Fee's NICNT commentary on Romans (because this is not a commentary). As you read the letter of Paul to the Romans and are considering your own

predispositions of Paul and his theology, allow the letter to be a fresh word from God and place yourself as a Christian in Rome hearing the teachings of Paul for the first time. Disclosure: I received this book free from Baker Academic through the Baker Academic Blogger Review Program. The opinions I have expressed are my own, and I was not required to write a positive review. I am disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255.

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