at the end of his third missionary journey, before he traveled to Jerusalem (15:25; Acts 20:2, 3).

See map, “Paul’s Third and Fourth Journeys.”

**THEMES AND LITERARY STRUCTURE**

The key phrase of this epistle is found in 1:17: “the righteousness of God.” This phrase encapsulates the very heart of the epistle. Romans is written, therefore, to show how sinful men and women can receive the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ. The theme of divine righteousness that runs through the book is reflected in the following outline: the revelation of the righteousness of God (chs. 1–8); the vindication of the righteousness of God (chs. 9–11); and the application of the righteousness of God (chs. 12–16).

Within the context of his overarching theme of the righteousness of God, Paul discusses the need of sinful humanity for God’s righteousness (1:18—3:20), the imputation of Christ’s righteousness to sinful human beings in justification (3:21—5:21), and the sanctification of the redeemed (6:1—8:39). In addition Paul discusses God’s righteousness as revealed in His faithfulness to His covenant promises to Israel (9:1—11:36), and the righteousness that Christians are to display before each other and before the world (12:1—16:27).

In his sweeping presentation of God’s plan of salvation, Paul moves from condemnation to glorification and from theological truth to practical behavior. Key words, such as righteousness, faith, law, all, and sin, each appear at least sixty times in this epistle.