

Romans 1:1-17 “Paul, a servant¹ of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God,² which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures,³ concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh⁴ and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord,⁵ through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations,⁶ including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ,⁷ To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.⁸ First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed in all the world.⁹ For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I mention you¹⁰ always in my prayers, asking that somehow by God's will I may now at last succeed in coming to you.¹¹ For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you—¹²that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine.¹³ I want you to know, brothers,¹ that I have often intended to come to you (but thus far have been prevented), in order that I may reap some harvest among you as well as among the rest of the Gentiles.¹⁴ I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians,¹ both to the wise and to the foolish.¹⁵ So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.¹⁷ For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith."

Introductory Remarks:

- **R. C. Sproul:** “...in Romans we have the nearest thing to a systematic theology to be found anywhere in the New Testament.”¹
- **William Barclay:** “When Paul wrote to the Church in Rome he was writing to a church with whose founding he had had nothing whatever to do.”
- **Dibelius:** “It is of all Paul’s letters the least conditioned by the momentary situation.”
- **Philip Melancthon:** “A compendium of Christian doctrine, somewhat detached from any particular socio-historical context.”²
- **Luther:** “The really chief part of the NT, and the purest gospel. It is worthy not only that every Christian should know it word for word, by heart, but also that he should occupy himself with it every day, as the daily bread of the soul. It can never be read or pondered too much, and the more it is dealt with the more precious it becomes, and the better it tastes.”³
- **Tyndale:** “[Romans is] the principal and most excellent part of the New Testament, and most pure Euangelion, that is to say, glad tidings...and also a light and a way in unto the whole Scripture.”⁴

¹ R. C. Sproul, *Focus on the Bible: Romans* (Ross-shire: Christian Focus Publications Ltd., 1994), p. 9.

² As quoted in John Stott, *Romans, God's Good News for the World* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity, 1994), 31.

³ Martin Luther, *Commentary on Romans* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1954), p. xiii.

⁴ From William Tyndale’s translation of the New Testament (1534).

- **Burton** called Romans “prophylactic.” A prophylactic is something which guards against infection.
- **Calvin:** ...I was at first deterred by this thought (writing a commentary on the book of Romans); for I feared, lest I should incur the imputation of presumption by applying my hand to a work which had been executed by so many illustrious workmen...and truly they could have never employed their labours in a better way; *for when anyone understands this Epistle, he has a passage open to him to the understanding of the whole Scripture.*⁵

Significance of the Book:

- Augustine came to Christ through reading the book
- Luther came to Christ by reading the book

Date of the Book:

- Most likely 57 A.D.⁶

Who Founded the Church in Rome?

- Unknown.
 - The suggestion that Peter founded it cannot be right.⁷

The Purpose of the book:

- **Romans 15: 20-27**—²⁰It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known, so that I would not be building on someone else's foundation. ²¹Rather, as it is written: “Those who were not told about him will see, and those who have not heard will understand.” ²²This is why I have often been hindered from coming to you. ²³But now that there is no more place for me to work in these regions, and since I have been longing for many years to see you, ²⁴I plan to do so when I go to Spain. I hope to visit you while passing through and to have you assist me on my journey there, after I have enjoyed your company for a while. ²⁵Now, however, I am on my way to Jerusalem in the service of the saints there. ²⁶For Macedonia and Achaia were pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem. ²⁷They were pleased to do it, and indeed they owe it to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in the Jews' spiritual blessings, they owe it to the Jews to share with them their material blessings.
- **Moo:** “Paul had completed his collection of money from his largely Gentile churches and is now on his way to Jerusalem to deliver the money to the Jewish saints there. This collection was an important project for Paul, as may be gauged from the fact that he talks about it in every letter written on the third missionary journey (cf. also 1 Cor.

⁵ John Calvin, *Calvin's Commentaries*, 22 volumes, translated by the Rev. William Pringle (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1996), vol. XIX, p. xxvi.

⁶ F. F. Bruce, *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), p. 475.

⁷ The *Catalogus Liberianus* (A. D. 354) names Peter as the founder and first bishop of the Roman church, but earlier tradition associates both Peter and Paul with the founding of the church (c. Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 3.1.2; 3.3.1). Because this earlier version is obviously incorrect, the later version is even more suspect (see O. Cullmann, *Peter: Disciple, Apostle, Martyr* [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1962], pp. 72-157).

16:1-4; 2 Cor. 8-9). Its importance goes beyond meeting the material needs of the poor Christians in Judea; Paul views it as a practical way to cement the fractured relationship between the Gentile churches of the mission field and the Jewish churches in the ‘home’ country.”⁸

Setting:

- A mixed community: both Jews and Gentiles
- Theological difference—“different convictions about the status of God’s covenant and law, and so about salvation.”⁹
- Five distinct house churches.¹⁰
- Two themes:
- The justification of guilty sinners by God’s grace alone in Christ alone through faith alone
- The redefinition of the people of God, no longer according to descent, circumcision or culture, but according to faith in Jesus.

“Paul,

- The name of **Paul**.
- Augustine believed that it was his Christian name, Origen thought he had two names, a Jewish and a Roman. Calvin believed the latter because it was “more known and more common, more acceptable in the Roman empire” (pg. 40).

a servant (*doulos*) of Christ Jesus,

- “A servant of Jesus Christ.” He seeks to show two things
 - First: His call or vocation as an apostle was not by his own desire, will, effort, but by God’s election.
 - Second: His call was inextricably connected with the Church of Rome
 - “Paul’s favorite title for Jesus is LORD (*kurios*). The opposite of LORD (*kurios*) is *slave* (*doulos*).” ~ Barclay (p. 11)

called to be an apostle,

- By claiming to be a *servant* of Christ he was showing what he had in common with other teachers,
- But by claiming for himself apostleship “he put himself before others; but as no authority is due to him who willfully intrudes himself, he reminds us, that he was appointed by God.”
 - The NT apostle functioned in the same capacity as the OT prophet. Hence, the apostle is the NT version of the OT prophet.¹¹

set apart for the gospel

- The word ‘gospel’ is not, in the first instance, a religious word.
- Greeks loved to build words
 - Eu + angelos

⁸ Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), p. 2.

⁹ Stott, p. 34.

¹⁰ Harold Hoehner, *Romans*, ITS (tape 1).

¹¹ See Wayne Grudem, *The Gift of Prophecy* (Eastbourne: Kingsway, 1988).

- Good Message
- Eu + Logos
 - Eulogy: Good word
- Eu + thanatos
 - Euthanasia: good death

of God,

- The gospel that belongs to God.
- ²**which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures,**
 - The gospel was not promulgated by the Prophets, only promised.
- ³**concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh ⁴and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord,**
 - Two things must be found in Christ in order to obtain salvation
 - Divinity and
 - Humanity
 - *Vos*: “The reference is not to two coexisting side in the constitution of the Saviour, but to two successive stages in his life...”¹²
 - Paul traces his ancestry from David. The Davidic covenant.
 - II Timothy 2:8 “Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David. This is my gospel...”
 - II Samuel 7:15-16

⁵**through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith**

- A wonderfully succinct statement of the gospel
 - Obedience comes from faith. NOT the other way around.
 - The chief act of disobedience is unbelief
 - *Murray*: “...the most characteristic feature of a believer is that he is holy in heart and manner of life.”¹³

for the sake of his name among all the nations, ⁶including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ, ⁷To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints:

- Calvin: “If they wished their own calling to remain sure, they were not to reject the ministry of Paul, who had been chosen by the same election of God.”¹⁴

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ⁸First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed in all the world.

- This is quite a reputation for a church to have.
 - *Calvin*: He implies that their “faith had been received from God. We are here taught that faith is God’s gift; for thanksgiving is an acknowledgment of a

¹² Geerhardus Vos, *The Eschatological Aspect of the Pauline Conception of the Spirit in Biblical and Theological Studies* (New York, 1912), pp. 228-230.

¹³ John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), p. 16.

¹⁴ Calvin, p. 49.

benefit. He who gives thanks to God for faith, confesses that it comes from him.”¹⁵

⁹For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I mention you ¹⁰always in my prayers, asking that somehow by God's will I may now at last succeed in coming to you. ¹¹For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you—¹²that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine. ¹³I want you to know, brothers, that I have often intended to come to you (but thus far have been prevented),

- This is often the way things are for us as well.
 - We make our plans, but the Lord determines our steps.

in order that I may reap some harvest among you as well as among the rest of the Gentiles. ¹⁴I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, ¹both to the wise and to the foolish.

- *Stott*: “These affirmations are so striking because “they are in direct antithesis to the attitude of many in the contemporary church. People nowadays tend to regard evangelism as an optional extra and consider (if they engage in it) that they are conferring a favor on God; Paul spoke of it as an obligation. The modern mood is one of reluctance; Paul’s was one of eagerness or enthusiasm. Many of us today would have to confess, if we are honest, that we are ashamed of the gospel; Paul declared that he was not.”¹⁶
- Two ways of getting into debt.
 1. Borrow money from someone.
 2. To be given money for someone by a third party.

For example, if I were to borrow \$1,000 from you, I would be in your debt until I paid it back. Equally, if a friend of yours were to hand me \$1,000 to give to you, I would be in your debt until I handed it over. In the former case I would have got myself into debt by borrowing; in the latter it is your friend who has put me in your debt by entrusting me with \$1,000 for you. It is in this second sense that Paul is in debt.¹⁷

¹⁵So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome. ¹⁶For I am not ashamed of the gospel,

- “I am not ashamed...” “there is no sense in declaring that you’re not ashamed of something unless you’ve been tempted to feel ashamed of it.”¹⁸

for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. ¹⁷For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith."

Introduction:

- *Luther*: “There I began to understand that [the] righteousness of God is that by which the righteous lives by a gift of God, namely by faith. And this is the meaning: the righteousness of God is revealed by the gospel, namely, the passive righteousness

¹⁵ Calvin, p. 52.

¹⁶ Stott, 58.

¹⁷ Stott, 59.

¹⁸ James Stewart of Edinburgh, as found in Stott, p. 60.

with which [the] merciful God justifies us by faith...Here I felt that I was altogether born again and had entered paradise itself through open gates. Here a totally other face of the entire Scripture showed itself to me...And I extolled my sweetest word with a love as great as the hatred with which I had before hated the word 'righteousness of God.' Thus that place in Paul was for me truly the gate to paradise."¹⁹

- Melancthon once observed that one who was ignorant in matters of grammar was of perforce also ignorant in matters of theology.²⁰
- Each verse is a dependant clause built on the previous verse, starting with verse 14 all they way to verse 23. So it might read like this...
 - Both to Greeks and barbarians, both to wise and foolish, I am under obligation (to preach the gospel). For that reason my purpose also to preach the gospel even to you who are in Rome. (Why evening Rome?) Because I am not ashamed of the gospel. (Why am I not ashamed of it?) Because it is God's power for salvation for everyone who believes, Jew first and also Greek. (Why to everyone who believes). Because God's righteousness is revealed in it from faith for the purpose of faith, just as Scripture says: "the one who is righteous by faith shall live." (Why is God's righteousness needed in order to live?) Because God's wrath is being revealed from heaven against every impiousness and wickedness of those people who are suppressing the truth by wickedness (How do we know they are suppressing the truth out of wickedness?) Because what is known of God is plain to them. (Why is it plain to them?) Because God make it plain to them. (But how can it be plain to them?) Because God's unseen attributes, both his eternal power and deity, are seen from the creation of the world, perceived through the things God has done. (But why then the wrath?) Because although they knew God they did not glory in him as God or give thanks to him, but they were made foolish in their reasoning, and their stupid minds were darkened. (What is the result of all that?) Thinking they were wise, they fell into stupidity, and they exchanged the glory of the immortal God for the likeness of the image of mortal humans and birds and animals and reptiles.²¹

¹⁹ John Dillenberger, ed., *Martin Luther: Selections from His Writings* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday and Co., 1961), xvii.

²⁰ As quoted in Interpretation, Paul Achtemeier, *A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching: Romans* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1985), p. 35.

²¹ Achtemeier, p. 36.