

ROMANS: One Verse at a Time

Romans 1

Greeting

1 Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called *to be* an apostle, separated to the gospel of God ² which He promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures, ³ concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, ⁴ and declared *to be* the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead. ⁵ Through Him we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations for His name, ⁶ among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ;

⁷ To all who are in Rome, beloved of God, called *to be* saints:

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul,
a bondservant of Jesus Christ,
called *to be* an apostle,
separated to the gospel of God

Paul is the unchallenged author of the Letter to the Romans. Born as **Saul** in Tarsus, he was a man uniquely prepared by God, "**separated to the gospel.**" His life was the union of the three dominant cultures of his day. He was Jewish by family and education, born and further educated in a **Greek** city, and a citizen of the Roman Empire.

As a Pharisee of Pharisees, Paul was a scholar in the Hebrew Scriptures, our **Old Testament**. Originally, he persecuted Christians, rejecting the Messianic claim of Jesus of Nazareth. But the risen Christ appeared to Paul on the road to Damascus and Paul trusted Him as Lord and Savior. Immediately God appointed Paul as **an apostle** of the gospel of the Savior he just came to know. A few days after his salvation, Paul began to preach Jesus.

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Although an apostle, Paul considered himself a **bondservant** of Christ. Like the servant of Ex. 21:5-6, having been set free Paul **voluntarily** chose to be the servant of the Lord for the rest of his life.

Paul does not even finish the first sentence of his letter before he introduces its **theme**: **the gospel of God**. He both begins and ends with it (16:25-26). In brief but powerful statements he offers a foreshadowing of the great themes to be addressed in the subsequent pages of his epistle. He tells us the gospel was **promised** by God in Old Testament times and proclaimed by the **prophets**. He states that this good news from God is centered in His Son, Jesus Christ.

Though the Son of God, He was also a man **born of ... flesh**, and His deity proven by His **resurrection**. And Paul declares, we are the beneficiaries of this gospel that has come through Jesus. **We have received grace** which enables **obedience to the faith**, which is a synonym for **salvation**. Paul's apostleship was to bring this salvation to the **nations**, of which Paul says to the Romans, you are a part. You too are **called** by the Lord **Jesus Christ**.

As clearly as the author of the letter is revealed, so also are the **recipients**. He is writing to believers **in Rome**, the capital city of the empire. How did these Romans hear the gospel and become believers? Most certainly not from the ministry of **Peter** or some other apostle because Paul said he refused to build on another man's foundation (15:20).

called *to be saints*:

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Surely some Jews from Rome were in Jerusalem for the Feast of **Pentecost** and were among the 3,000 saved on that day. They brought the message of Christ back to others **beloved of God and called to be saints** – believers. Paul greets these fellow believers with his standard blessing of **grace** and **peace**.

Desire to Visit Rome

⁸ First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world. ⁹ For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of His Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers, ¹⁰ making request if, by some means, now at last I may find a way in the will of God to come to you. ¹¹ For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, so that you may be established— ¹² that is, that I may be encouraged together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me.

¹³ Now I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that I often planned to come to you (but was hindered until now), that I might have some fruit among you also, just as among the other Gentiles. ¹⁴ I am a debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to wise and to unwise. ¹⁵ So, as much as is in me, *I am* ready to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome also.

⁸ First, **I thank my God** through Jesus Christ for you all,

that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.

Paul was a man who was genuinely thankful to God. He was thankful for his own **salvation** after he persecuted Christians, but he was also **thankful** for the salvation of others, including these believers he had never met in Rome. He was grateful not only that they had come to saving **faith** but also for the testimony of their **sustaining** faith which was so great that it was spoken of throughout the empire.

Paul writes the Roman letter from Corinth on his **third** missionary journey around 58 A.D. Nine years earlier the Emperor Claudius had begun to expel believing Jews from Rome because of their **faith**. Since that time, they had

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endured great persecution; but they had withstood the test by their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The story of their inspiring faith was being told around **the world**.

Another characteristic of Paul was his genuineness, his **authenticity**. He says he serves God with his **spirit**, which is that part of man unique to humankind, that part made most directly like the Creator Himself who is Spirit. Jesus taught us that those who worship the Father must worship in **spirit** and in truth. Paul did. The word “**serve**” in the N.T. always means religious service, and it is therefore often translated “**worship**.” The two are intimately related. As John MacArthur said, “His worship was an act of **service**, and his **service** was an act of worship.”

Paul’s service to God was always **in the gospel of His Son**. Preaching this gospel, living this good news, was his calling and his very life. Because the Roman believers have never **met** Paul personally, Paul calls upon God as a **witness** of his love for them and that he **prays** for them constantly.

Paul not only prayed for the Romans, he prayed that God would let him **come** to Rome to be an instrument of God’s blessing upon them. Like Jesus, this was Paul’s desire only if it was **in the will of God**.

Paul wanted to see the believers in Rome, but not out of mere curiosity or any selfish motive. He wanted to give them a **spiritual gift**. He is not speaking of the “gifts of the **Spirit**” discussed in chapter 12, because those gifts are

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given directly by the Holy Spirit without the intervention of any **man**. Paul is talking about the blessings that God would bring through his ministry of preaching, **teaching**, exhorting, encouraging, and correcting, so that the Christians would be firmly **established** in their faith. He also acknowledged that he also would **mutually** benefit from what God would do among them when they were together.

Paul wants them to know that his failure to come before now has not been from **lack** of desire. But now he plans to come that he might **have fruit** among them, meaning both that more people would come to faith in Christ and that believers would be **grown** spiritually to greater maturity in the Lord as has been the case among the **other Gentiles**.

Why would Paul call himself a **debtor to Greeks and barbarians** and to the **wise and the unwise**? Because when Paul saw himself as a wise and sophisticated Hellenized **Jew** but God saw him as a rebellious, ignorant, foolish **sinner**, Christ saved him! Now the same Christ has called Paul to go to all of those who need the Savior just as Paul did. Not only out of joy, but out of **obligation**, Paul went.

And he was always **ready to preach**, and he always preached **the gospel**. To the Corinthians he said, “Woe is me if I do not preach the **gospel**.” (1 Cor. 9:16)

The Just Live by Faith

¹⁶ 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. ¹⁷ For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, “*The just shall live by faith.*”

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These two verses present the **thesis** of the Book of Romans. This is what the letter is all about, which is the reason this book carries such value spiritually. Nowhere is the gospel explained more fully, more clearly, than in the book of Romans. Nowhere are more questions answered that are raised about the gospel than in Romans.

Paul was beaten, imprisoned, stoned, mocked, ridiculed, and derided for preaching a gospel that centered upon the **cross**. It was a stumbling block to Jews; it was **foolishness** to Gentiles. But Paul never changed a jot or tittle of the message. He was **not ashamed of the gospel of Christ** because only that true gospel had the power of God to bring salvation to everyone who would believe.

The Greek word for **power** is the root from which we get our word “**dynamite**.” It is not man’s power which is inept and ineffectual. It is God’s power that alone can accomplish salvation.

Salvation means receiving the **gift** of eternal life and being transformed to be the person God designed and purposed.

The gospel offers that salvation to **everyone who believes** or who

the gospel

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trusts, which is a better translation of the Greek.

Because, Paul says, in the gospel, **God reveals** how a person is made **righteous** before Him. In the gospel God shows how a thrice **holy** God can take the most vile and filthy sinner and wash away their uncleanness and make them as white as snow. In the gospel, God declares how a person whose life is failure and ruin can be remade to become the child of God the Creator desired for them to be before the foundation of the world.

And through that gospel God shows this miracle over and over again as one person comes to faith in Christ, and then another comes to faith, and another, and another – from **faith** to **faith**.

That faith, that trust is not just a **one**-time act. It is a way of life. Those who are made righteous are not those who one time trusted in Christ but those who trust in Christ. They were saved eternally by faith the moment they first trusted in Him, but now they **continue** in that faith and live by it day by day. **The just shall live by faith!**
