

## Romans 1

In the letter to the Romans, Paul is writing a group of Roman converts about 30 years after the resurrection of Jesus. We don't know how they came to Christ, but we do know that their testimony was circulating around the Roman Empire. Roman polytheism was becoming increasingly unpopular at this time. Some Gentiles sought the truth in Judaism. When Christian converts came to share in the synagogues, these converts were often the first to respond. The church in Rome was made up mostly of this type of Gentile believer who had first accepted Judaism and then Jesus as the Messiah.

It would be another 7 years before Nero would expel the Christians from Rome. Perhaps the Holy Spirit laid it upon the Apostle's heart to encourage and strengthen this church to prepare them for the difficult times to come. Paul has founded most of the Gentile churches and considered his calling as an Apostle to the Gentiles. Upon hearing of this church he did not start, he feels a burden to see that they are grounded upon solid teaching of the Gospel. As we go through the letter we will see how he encourages them in their dealings with the temptations in Roman life, in some of the controversial issues in the Church at that time, and in daily living the life of one called to be a saint.

This letter is filled with sound doctrine and teachings upon which the Church looks for clarification of many issues. It has more doctrinal clarification than perhaps any other letter. Chapters 1-8 deal with salvation; 9-11 the unbelief of the Jews and how it benefits Gentiles; 12-15:13 contain general principles for Christian living. At this time in history many beautiful works of literature, poems and philosophy were written. The letter to the Romans has far surpassed them all in influence upon the world and the souls of men. Romans is the quintessence of Paul's gospel.

**vs 1** servant - *doulos*, one who puts himself in servitude to another, or is sold as a possession. Everyone is a slave, to one master or another. Ro 6:17,18 A slave subsists by his Master's care and seeks to please and obey his Master every waking hour. Every Christian should be in servitude to Christ Jesus the Lord (Master). Servant is also used to describe prophets. (Amos 3:7; Jeremiah 7:25)

To be a slave of the Emperor was considered a great privilege and a high position. They wore the brand of their Master in their forehead with honor. Paul sees greater honor in being the servant of Almighty God. He'll discuss this in detail in chapter 6. set-apart - *aphorizo* to mark off and separate with boundaries. FOR the gospel. This is how Paul defined himself, a slave who is limited in freedom for the Good News of God. Here's a reminder to myself that came to me in prayer: My tongue is limited to the boundaries placed upon it by the Word of God. My actions are mine to will and I will that they be controlled by the will of God. My feet can go where I choose and I choose to walk where He sends me. That is *aphorizo*.

**vs 2** Paul is not bringing something new, but revealing the coming of the fulfillment of ancient promises that came through prophets. That includes the prophets of the Old Testament including Moses and David.

**vs 3** He is careful to say it is his humanity that was descended from the line of David. David and God had a salt covenant agreement when David ate the shewbread. His lineage was to

reign over Israel forever. 2Chron 13:5, 2Sam 7:12-16 Solomon was a picture of Christ building the temple. He took the gifts of God and placed them back in His hands. The gospel is all about the Son. He fills the pages of the Old Covenant. Wouldn't it have been awesome to walk to Emmaus and have listened to Him explain that?

Lk 24:32

vs 4 Get what this is saying: Through his holiness, the resurrection from death declared with power, Jesus to be God's only Son, that is Joshua (the salvation of God) Christ (the Messiah) our Lord (Master)! His humanity is from David but his spirit was from God. If you doubt the virgin birth, look at his resurrection. It proves He indeed is the Son of God.

vs 5 We call people to obedience that comes from faith. To believe what we cannot see produces obedience. It begins with repentance and transforms the life from there! The Gospel message is obedience to God and just gets started with repentance. Official representative, 'apostle', was what he is really referring to. He is giving his authority to write the letter.

vs 6 & 7 The gospel in a word- 'loved' by God! But then there is the outcome, called to be saints. In the early church they referred to other believers in the Way as saints, not Christians. The term Christian was a term of derision applied to the believers by the world in Antioch. Later it became a name of honor. Remember though that 'saint' was the preferred term. Saint means called to obedience that comes from faith, vs5. Grace and peace to you is a common greeting but to the Christian it suddenly became very rich and powerful with implications that touch everything we are and do. What does grace and peace to you from the Father and from the Son, imply to you?

vs 8 These Roman Christians Paul had never met were famous for their testimony. This was only about 25 years after Pentecost. Do we thank God for our brothers in Nigeria? I've heard about them. Korea? I've heard about the power of prayer there. We are a part of the universal church.

vs 9 Paul's passion - whole hearted preaching! He constantly remembers them in prayer even though he has not met them. With all the people he has met and churches he started we are talking about a lot of prayer. The early church was successful in the face of persecution because of the prayers of the faithful.

vs 10-12 The trail there was blazed in prayer. Imagine meeting someone you've been praying for, for some time, and have no face to put with the prayers. This desire of Paul's is the desire of too few. To want to bless our family and strengthen them is a desire from God. But watch in the next verse what happens when we do that. When you bless others you yourself receive a blessing. The body builds itself up as it shares. We are all more interconnected than we think. A leader who does not humble himself to receive encouragement and faith from those he ministers to is egotistical blind man. The Apostle Paul was looking forward to being encouraged by their faith and hoping to encourage them as well.

vs 13,14 "Because of all that I have received from them and because of all it is my duty to give to them, I am under an obligation to all sorts of men." —Barclay's Daily Study Bible (NT) Paul felt an obligation for Gentile believers and to hear testimonies of this body, that he did not start, thrills him and yet gives him an intense desire to share in establishing their

foundation. He wants to make sure they are standing on solid footing. Paul is the Apostle to the Gentiles. Galatians 2:9 Did he have a sense of how this body of believers in the world's capital could affect the Empire? obligated = to owe someone, to be in debt to them. Do I have this sense of owing anyone? We should allow the Spirit to put it in our hearts.

**vs 15** He explains the burden placed upon him by the Spirit and the intensity of his desire. eager = throughout me is a willingness- three Greek words. Has God given you such a desire for some type of ministry?

**vs 16** The good news is described in verse 5&7. Power to obey, to become saints! To every believer the gospel is the life transforming power of God. Acts 26:20 How can we be ashamed of that? Is it translating itself into that power in me and those I share with? Did Paul abandon the Jew first ideology? Acts 13:46, 18:6 or is he just speaking chronologically of the working of God amongst men.

**vs 17** One of Paul's favorite quotes and a cornerstone of his theology. Righteousness is not something we do. It is what we receive by faith and works itself out in our actions. Hab 2:4 This was the verse that captured the heart of Martin Luther and started the Protestant Reformation.

What applications do you see in this first section for your own life?

What has the Spirit impressed upon your own heart in this passage?

Are you willing for the Lord to give you a passion for some kind of ministry?