

# CLASS 1: PAUL AND THE CHURCH AT ROME (Romans 1:1-17)

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## I. Introduction (Rom 1:1-17)

Paul begins with a warm greeting, emphasizing his place as an apostle of the gospel of God, the theme of the book. He explains how he desires to visit the Romans, especially since he is commissioned by God to carry the gospel to all people, Gentile as well as Jew.

The gospel is the power of God, since it reveals the righteousness of God, which saves as well as judges. This salvation comes through faith. The rest of the book expounds this great theme. In this sense, the Introduction to Romans is like an overture to an opera, summarizing and anticipating the main themes to be developed in the body of the work.

[All biblical quotations in these notes, unless otherwise noted, are taken from the ESV.]

### Paul himself

<sup>1</sup> *Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God,*

Greek letters – begin with sender, then the addressee

Paul's own place:

Servant (slave) of Christ Jesus

Apostle (Gal 1-2)

Apostle to Gentiles (Rom 1:5; ch. 15; Eph 3)

Apostle of the new covenant (Jer 31; Ezek 36; Heb 8; Rom 2:14-15; 2 Cor 2:14 – ch. 3 [especially 2:14-15; 3:3, 6])

### Paul's gospel

*[the gospel of God,]<sup>2</sup> which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures,<sup>3</sup> concerning his Son,*

“The gospel” (Greek *euangelion*), the basic Christian message (1 Cor 15:1-8)

1:1 – gospel of God (genitive of source)

1:9 – gospel of his Son (genitive of description)

1:15 – the gospel (part of the verb)

1:16 – the gospel (noun)

2:16 – my gospel (gospel of Paul; genitive of immediate source or of association)

The gospel in the prophets:

Examples:

Gen 12 (referred to in Gal 3:8, 16)

Isa 42:6

Isa 53:4-6, 8, 10 (guilt offering, offering), 12

Isa 52:15 (quoted in Rom 15:20-21)

## Paul's Savior

*[his Son], who was descended from David according to the flesh <sup>4</sup> 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,*

V. 3, family of David (to fulfill Davidic covenant, 2 Sam 7)

“According to the flesh” – Jesus’ human nature, not his divine nature

V. 4, “Son-of-God-with-power” – he always was the Son of God, but since his resurrection is invested with power (*dunamis*; cf. Matt 28:18, “all power [*exousia*] has been given unto me”)

## Paul's ministry

*<sup>5</sup> 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, <sup>6</sup> including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ,*

“Through whom” – Paul made an apostle by Jesus personally, not selected by others (emphasized in Gal 1)

## V. 5, “the obedience of faith”

- Genitive, “of faith”:
  - Genitive of source, “the obedience that comes from faith”
  - Or genitive of apposition, “the obedience which is faith”

## The Addressee, the church at Rome

<sup>7</sup> *To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints:*

Loved by God, idea of foreknowledge (= “fore-loved”)

For relationship of foreknowledge to election, see Rom 8:28-30

Called to be saints – “effectual calling”; emphasizes goal of our call by God

## Apostolic greeting

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

Addition of “grace and peace” to standard salutation of Greek letters (“Greetings!”)

## Testimony of Roman church

<sup>8</sup> *First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed in all the world.*

“All the world” – meaning many different parts of the Roman Empire where Paul has traveled, frequently used phrase, not literal

## Paul’s desires concerning the Roman church

<sup>9</sup> *For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I mention you* <sup>10</sup> *always in my prayers, asking that somehow by God’s will I may now at last succeed in coming to you.* <sup>11</sup> *For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you-* <sup>12</sup> *that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other’s faith, both yours and mine.* <sup>13</sup> *I want you to know, brothers, 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.*

Call on God for a witness – an oath

Paul's prayers:

- Faithful, frequent prayer
- Desire to come to Rome
- Romans' spiritual growth (v. 11, cf. purpose of book)

Prevented from coming

- How?
- Why?
- "Somehow" – to be fulfilled courtesy of the Roman government

## Paul's obligation

*<sup>14</sup> I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. <sup>15</sup> So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.*

Paul obligated to preach the gospel to the Gentiles

- Cf. 1 Cor 9:15-17

"Wise and foolish" – gospel adapted to all (1 Cor 1:18-25)

## Paul's message: the gospel's glory

*<sup>16</sup> 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. <sup>17</sup> For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith."*

V. 16, "not ashamed" – evangelical imperative

"The power (*dunamis*) of God" – again: "effectual calling"

"Jew first, also Greek" – pattern in Paul's ministry in Acts

- Jews entitled to hear first because of their national election (Rom 9-11)
- And, in Paul's case, they are his countrymen

V. 17, Martin Luther's converting verse

"The righteousness of God"

- Genitive of characteristic quality – God’s own personal righteousness
- Genitive of source – “the righteousness that comes from God”
- Second idea better, fits with Rom 3

“From faith to faith” – ever-increasing faith of the elect

“The righteous (just) will live by faith” – quotation of Hab 2:4; quoted 3 times in NT:

- Rom 1:17 – “The righteous (just) will live by faith”
- Gal 3:11 – “The righteous (just) will live by faith”
- Heb 10:38 – “The righteous (just) will live by faith”