

Romans

“I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes”

– Romans 1:16

Salutation

- **Paul identifies himself by three descriptions (vs. 1):**
 - *Bondservant of Jesus Christ* – literally, a slave (Gr. *doulos*), having given himself willingly to the service of Christ (cf. Rom 6:16-20)
 - *Called to be an apostle* – “to be” in some translations is not original; in fact, “called” is an adjective (Whiteside 7), thus “*a called apostle*”
 - Despite attacks to the contrary (Gal 1-2; II Cor 11,12; etc.)
 - *Separated to the gospel of God* – “Separated” in nearly every sense of the term (cf. Phil 3:4-11)
 - Paul was entirely dedicated to the task of preaching the gospel, no matter the personal loss
 - The gospel did not originate with him, but directly from the mind of God (cf. Gal 1:11-12; I Cor 2:1-14)
- These statements are clear and firm: Paul puts forward exactly who he is and what his life is about

Salutation

- **The apostle describes the gospel of God (vs. 2-4):**
 - *He promised beforehand through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures* –
 - To the Gentiles: evidence of God’s foreknowledge and power (Isa 42:8-9)
 - To the Jews: the Word they trusted points toward and culminates in the gospel, including all points that follow in this letter (e.g. Rom 1:16)
 - *Concerning His Son Jesus Christ*:
 - Humanity: born of the seed of David (John 1:14; Gal 4:4)
 - Deity: powerfully proven to be the Son of God by the resurrection, i.e. His own resurrection (cf. I Cor 15)
 - “*spirit of holiness*” seems to stand in contrast to “*flesh*” thus indicating the divine nature of Christ (see Reese 4)
 - Authority: indicated by “*our Lord*” (cf. Matt 28:18ff; Acts 2:36)

Salutation

- **The blessings of Jesus Christ through the gospel (vs. 5-6):**
 - *Through whom we have received* –
 - The “apostolic we” (cf. I Cor 2) – Paul associates himself with the other inspired apostles (see again I Cor 11-12; Gal 1-2)
 - They were made apostles by Jesus Himself, an office that exclusively and fully existed in them (cf. Luke 6; Acts 1, 9)
 - But not because of their own inherent worth, but by the grace of God (cf. Eph 2:1-10; I Tim 1:12-17)
 - *For obedience to the faith* –
 - “*For*” is the Greek *eis*, meaning “to bring about” (cf. Acts 2:38; Matt 26:28)
 - **i.e. the entire purpose of their apostleship:** to bring people to obedient faith in the gospel
 - True faith leads to obedience; obedience perfects faith (Jam 2)

Salutation

- **The blessings of Jesus Christ through the gospel (vs. 5-6):**
 - *Among all the nations, for His name's sake* –
 - “*All the nations*” is literally “*all Gentiles*” (see NIV, NAS), so Paul focuses on the primary scope of his apostleship (I Tim 2:7, etc.)
 - More broadly, the gospel is meant for every creature (Mark 16:15), and a good portion of *Romans* sets out the desperate need of every person to hear and obey the gospel
 - “*for His name's sake*” means “to His glory,” i.e. all the efforts of the apostles, and indeed every Christians, is to glorify Christ
 - *Among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ* –
 - **i.e. you have been called to God through Jesus Christ** (see Rom 8:28-30; John 14:6)
 - This calling comes through the gospel (II Thes 2:13), and the main theme of *Romans* is the need to hear and heed that call

Paul's Relationship With The Romans

- Vss. 13, 15 make it clear that Paul had never personally met these Christians
- Still, in vss. 7-15, Paul remarks on the personal relationship he has with these “brethren” (vs. 13), though they are yet unseen to him
 - All part of the same glorious, adopted family (cf. 8:15, Eph 1:5)
 - With God as their Father and Christ as their Lord (vs. 7)
 - Partakers in the same saving faith (vs. 12; 5:1-2)
 - Somehow, through channels amongst the brethren, Paul heard news from and about these Christians (vs. 8, 15:14-16:24)
- To emphasize his relationship and love for these brethren, Paul points out three aspects of his regard and care for them:

Paul's Relationship With The Romans

- Prayers of thanksgiving (vs. 8-10):
 - Prayers he offered “without ceasing” – cf. Eph 1:16; Col 1:9; I Thes 1:3, 2:13
 - A statement that he did not make lightly, calling upon almighty God as his witness (vs. 9)
 - A practice he exhorted all Christians to imitate, I Thes 5:17
 - Thanksgiving for their faith “spoken of throughout the whole world” (vs. 8)
 - The faith of these Christians was *active* and *influential*, such that their example shined forth through the world (cf. I Thes 1:6-10)
 - Rome was, of course, the capital city of the Empire – practically the capital of the world: there was no limit to their potential
 - These Christians used that potential to glorify Christ and His gospel, and Paul was thankful for this good church: what about us?

Paul's Relationship With The Romans

- **Desire and plan to visit them (vs. 10-13a,15):**
 - Paul prayed that God would allow him and make a way for him to visit the church in Rome
 - He had plans of his own, but realized that all future plans truly rest in the hands of God (see Jam 4:13-15)
 - Paul recognized that the work of the Lord was more important than his own preferences to leave, travel, etc.
 - Paul made plans before to visit Rome, but had been “hindered”
 - No further explanation of these hindrances – but evidently it was the pressing need to preach elsewhere (cf. 15:20-23)
 - Sometimes Paul was hindered by God (Acts 16:7-10, cf. Phil 1:19; Acts 8:29, 10:9-16), and sometimes by Satan (1Thes 2:18)
- Paul worked fervently for the Lord wherever he was, as God provided opportunity, following the open doors – *what about us?*

Paul's Relationship With The Romans

- **Note: “impart to you some spiritual gift” (vs. 11)**
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Paul's Relationship With The Romans

- **Desire to preach the gospel (vs. 13b-15):**
 - Paul was indebted to all persons to preach the gospel as he had opportunity (vs. 14)
 - **Not** because all Greeks and Barbarians (i.e. everyone else not Greek, cf. Acts 28:2) had done anything for Paul personally
 - But Paul was indebted through the gospel: mercifully saved by Christ, and obligated to teach at every opportunity (Mark 16:15)
 - *As Christians, don't we all share this same responsibility?*
 - Paul longed to preach the gospel and so bear spiritual fruit in Rome
 - This was the labor of his life (cf. Phil 1:22; Col 1:5-6)
 - Truly, Paul acknowledged that he was just a sower of the Word, while God gives the increase (I Cor 3:6, 15:10; II Cor 9:10)
 - Everything within Paul, his desire and motivation, was to travel West and preach in Rome and beyond (15:28)

Special Study: Does Your Life Impart Spiritual Gifts?

- *“For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, so that you may be established...”* (Romans 1:11)
 - What was the gift that Paul wanted so eagerly to share with the Christians at Rome?
 - What did these gifts do for those Christians?
 - What does Paul’s attitude and example teach us today?

Does Your Life Impart Spiritual Gifts?

- Paul the Apostle and the Spirit of God:
 - Christ chose Paul to preach the gospel with power
 - See Acts 9 with II Tim 1:9-12
 - Paul was given the Spirit of God to do miraculous things
 - II Cor 11:5-6; Acts 14:3; I Cor 2:4-13; Acts 20:27
 - As an Apostle, Paul sometimes passed these miraculous abilities on to others
 - See Acts 8 with Acts 19:6; II Tim 1:6

Does Your Life Impart Spiritual Gifts?

- Paul Gave Other Spiritual Gifts, Too!
 - “gift” (i.e. Greek, *charisma*) does not always mean miraculous gifts (see Rom 5:15-16, 6:23)
 - What other spiritual gifts did Paul’s life impart?
 - The Word he preached – Eph 4:7-13
 - His commitment to serve others – Col 1:24-29; I Cor 9:19
 - His example before others – I Tim 4:12; Phil 3:17
 - *What influence has Paul’s life had on you and your faith?*
 - Like all righteous people, his life is still bearing fruit, still imparting gifts to others!

Does Your Life Impart Spiritual Gifts?

- Are you an example of obedient faith?
 - see Phil 2:12-15
- Are you doing your part to strengthen the body of Christ?
 - see Eph 4:14-16
- Do you encourage your brethren toward love and good works?
 - see Heb 10:23-24
 - **There is so much work for all of us to do, such that we and the Christians we influence might be “encouraged together” by our “mutual faith” (vs. 12)!**

God's Power For Salvation

- Vs. 16 – *“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ...”*
 - There was no reason for Paul to feel ashamed or embarrassed because of the word of Christ...
 - Even though he had suffered greatly for the gospel's sake (II Cor 11:16-20; Phil 3:2-10)
 - He had no fear of preaching the gospel even in the veritable capital of the world, amongst Christians he did not know (vs. 15)
- *“For it is the power of God for salvation...”*
 - Paul understood exactly what the gospel is and what it is able to accomplish!
 - Given by God, centered around Jesus Christ, revealed by the Holy Spirit, concerned with the highest moral ideals, and holding heaven as its promise: what reason is there for shame?
 - *Why are we so often hesitant to proclaim the good news?*

God's Power For Salvation

- *“For it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes...”*
 - More literally: *“For it is God’s power unto salvation”*
 - God displays His power in many ways: of **all** the means available to Him, God chose the gospel (and specifically preaching) as His effective means of bringing salvation to mankind
 - See Matt 18:18-20; Acts 2, 8, 10, 16:6-10, etc.; Rom 10:14-17; I Cor 1:18-25; Col 1:23, 28; II Tim 4:1-5; I Pet 1:22-25; etc.
- *The gospel is completely efficient in bringing salvation to man*
 - There is no person too lost and there is no part of the soul too remote for the gospel to reach and save (cf. Heb 7:25; I Tim 1:12-17)
 - There is no additional resource necessary to bring salvation apart from the saving message of the gospel (cf. II Tim 3:16-17)
 - The gospel is planned and crafted by God to fit the needs of the sinner exactly as he or she is: will you hear it and obey?

God's Power For Salvation

- *The gospel extends this salvation to everyone universally*
 - God wishes all people to choose salvation in Christ (I Tim 2:3-7; I Pet 1:17; etc.), no matter who they are!
 - Some will stubbornly choose the wisdom of the world over believing in the cross (I Cor 1:18-25)
 - Others will self-righteously claim they have no need of a saving message from God (John 8:31-59; Rom 10:1-3)
 - Still others will accept the gospel in part, but seek after something more (Gal 1:6-10; I Tim 1:1-4; etc.)
 - God chooses to save everyone who truly believes (John 3:16) – but this is a choice that we make on our own free will!
- *Do you have faith that the gospel, and nothing but the gospel, is what all people desperately need to be saved in Christ?*

God's Power For Salvation

- Notice the three uses of “for” (*gar*) in vs. 16-17, in each case giving reasons for what Paul most previously states:
 - Why is Paul read to preach in Rome? “For I am not ashamed...”
 - Why is Paul unashamed of the gospel? “For its it the power...”
 - Why or how does the gospel bring salvation?
- *“For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith...”*
- *The gospel reveals the righteousness of God by faith*
 - Is this God's own righteousness, or the righteousness He makes available to man in the gospel?
 - Both views are true – and may be intended – see Rom 3:21-26
 - The fact that Christ died for my sins accomplishes two things:
 1. It allows me, a sinner, to be judged righteous (i.e. “justified”)
 2. It proves the surpassing righteousness of God, demonstrating beyond doubt His goodness and holiness

God's Power For Salvation

- In the immediate context of vs. 17, it appears that Paul intends to mean the righteousness bestowed by God on man:
 - This is the righteousness that man gains from (by, NASU) *faith* – see Rom 3:22; Phil 3:9
 - i.e. God justifies us according to our faith, not our sinlessness
 - Fits vs. 17b – “*The just shall live by faith,*” i.e. they will live who have been justified by God according to their faith
 - *lit.* “The just by faith shall live,” whereas in Hebrews 10:38 (following the LXX), “My just one will live by his faith” (see Macknight 54)
 - The point is, the prophets foretold a righteousness that would come by faith
 - Fits vs. 18 – why do we need justification by faith to be saved? “*For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all...unrighteousness of men...*”

God's Power For Salvation

- What does it mean, “from faith to faith”?
 - The major translations are no help, especially the NIV in this case (i.e. “from first to last”)
 - “*revealed by faith*” means nothing – after all, the gospel was revealed by inspiration of God in order to produce faith (Rom 10:17)
 - Thus “by faith” must be attached to “the righteousness of God,” i.e. “*the righteousness of God by faith is revealed...*”
 - But what about “to faith”?
- In the gospel, the righteousness of God by faith is revealed **in order to produce faith within man**
 - The glory, wisdom of God's plan is revealed in the gospel so that we might hear and have faith – just as the Scriptures foretold (Hab 2:4 w. Gal 3:11, Heb 10:38)
 - *Source and purpose:* The gospel reveals God's righteousness as arising from faith, and is revealed in order to produce that faith.

God's Power For Salvation

“The righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith” is an assembly of words to which no distinct meaning can be attached. But the original, rightly construed, gives the following clear literal sense: “The righteousness of God by faith is revealed in it, in order to faith.” The apostle was not ashamed of the gospel, because a righteousness of God’s appointment, to be obtained by faith, is revealed in it, in order to produce faith in them to whom it is preached. The latter clause, “as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith,’” were better translated, “The just by faith shall live.”

— James Macknight, *Apostolical Epistles*, 54

God's Power For Salvation

We follow the translation given in the English Revised Version – deviating only as to the rendering of the clause in question, a deviation which, as we think, can be abundantly justified. The sentence with its separately indicated parts will read as follows: (1) “Therein is revealed (2) a righteousness of God by faith (3) in order to faith.”

– Isaiah Grubbs, *Commentary on Paul's Epistle to the Romans*

As quoted by Whiteside, pages 19-20

God's Power For Salvation

Is it in harmony with the rest of the Bible to say that a plan of righteousness...is revealed in the gospel as an inducement for men to believe? Notice the following: “Yet knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, even we believed on Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ, and not by the works of the law” (Gal 2:16). To get out from under condemnation, to be released from the penalty of sin, to be justified in God's sight – is that not enough to make any sin-burdened person want to be a Christian?

– R. L. Whiteside, *A New Commentary on Paul's Letter To the Saint At Rome*, 21

God's Power For Salvation

- *Final note to be revisited*: this “righteousness of God” obtained by man through faith *cannot be gained by perfect law keeping*
 - This is a main point of Rom 1:17 and Rom 3:19-20
 - The law (speaking here of the Old Testament) justifies now one, but only condemns wrongs since no one kept it perfectly
 - However, this does not necessarily rule out the fact that God still has *requirements* for man in the gospel that affect his salvation
 - Some people go to far with this idea and say that no form of obedience is necessary at all for a person to be saved by faith – an idea we will constantly have to consider while moving through Romans
 - Remember, God commanded the apostles to preach “for obedience to the faith” (Rom 1:5, 16:26)
 - That is, the gospel was preached for the distinct purpose of bring its hearers to an obedient faith

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