

Good News & Purpose

Romans 1:1-17

Introduction to Romans

- ❑ Paul's letter to the Romans was probably written in Corinth near the end of Paul's third missionary journey, in about A.D. 57 (*Romans 15:22-29; Acts 19:21; 20:3, 16*). The letter is addressed to the believers in Rome (*Romans 1:7, 15*), consisting of both Jewish and Gentile (non-Jewish) Christians, though Gentile Christians were greater in number.
- ❑ Paul's purposes for the letter include the following: 1) to prepare the recipients for his planned visit to Rome, and his proposed mission to Spain (*15:19-20, 24, 28*); 2) to provide a summary and explanation of the gospel; 3) to explain the relationship between Jews and Gentiles in God's plan of redemption; and 4) to provide instruction to the believers in Rome regarding their particular needs and problems.



Called to...

- ❑ Read Romans 1:1-7. In verse 1, Paul designates himself as follows: 1) a servant of Christ Jesus; 2) called to be an apostle;¹ and 3) set apart for the gospel of God² (*see Acts 26:15-18*).
 1. Paul is set apart for the gospel (good news). What *is* the good news? What does Paul say about the gospel in verses 2-4?³
- ❑ Paul's letter will expand on the great benefits received through the gospel of Jesus Christ. In verse 5, Paul mentions "grace" (God's unmerited favor) and his apostleship, through which many people (especially Gentiles) are "called." The believers in Rome are among the called.
 2. According to verses 5-7, what are believers "called to?"⁴

Reflection/Application

- Paul was called by God to *be* something and *do* something. Who (or what) is directing who *you* are and what *you* do?⁵ What is the basis of purpose in your life?
- If you are a true Christian, *you* are "called" as described in verses 5-7. In what ways does your life show that you "belong to Christ" and are "set apart" for God's purposes?

¹ 'apostle' – 'one who is sent.' Here it refers to Paul's designation as one of Christ's authoritative representatives.

² 'set apart' is part of being 'called.' Paul (and every Christian) is 'called out' and 'set apart.' In particular, Paul is set apart for the 'gospel' (from Old English *godspel*, 'good story;' Greek *euangelion*) – 'good message or news.'

³ Paul says that the gospel fulfills the Old Testament promises and prophecies. The gospel reveals two aspects of Jesus' identity and mission. According to the flesh (human nature), he was a descendent of David. According to the Spirit, Jesus was declared with power to be the 'Son of God' by his resurrection from death. Thus Jesus is identified as the Messiah (Christ) and Lord. In a sense, Jesus *is* the gospel. It is 'through Him' that great benefits are received.

⁴ (1) They are 'called to the obedience that comes from faith' (1:5). (2) They are 'called to belong to Jesus Christ' (1:6). As Paul was a servant of the Master (Jesus Christ), all Christians are called to recognize Christ as Lord of their lives. (3) They are 'called to be saints' (1:7). 'Saints' means 'set-apart ones' or 'holy ones.'

⁵ Of course, there is a complexity of factors and influences in one's life. However, what is primary in your life?

Longing⁶ to...

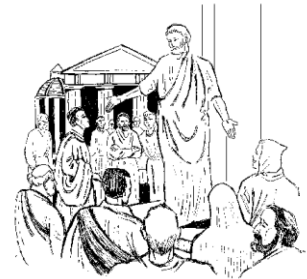
- Read Romans 1:8-15. Paul expresses his heart of prayer for the Romans, and his great desire to visit them (1:8-10). Paul wants to go to Rome to 1) share some spiritual gift to strengthen them – to be mutually encouraged; 2) see spiritual fruit (new life and spiritual growth); and 3) to fulfill his sense of obligation to preach the gospel among the Gentiles.

Reflection/Application

- As a believer, what do *you* pray about? What are *your* “longings” (great desires)? How do your prayers and longings relate to the gospel and God’s purposes?

Not Ashamed of...

- Read Romans 1:16-17. These verses are central to Paul’s letter to the Romans. Paul is “not ashamed of the gospel” (1:16a).⁷ Why is Paul not ashamed of the gospel? Why is Paul “so eager to preach the gospel to [the Gentiles]” (1:15)? Because it is “the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes” (1:16b).



3. What kind of “salvation” do you think Paul is talking about?⁸

- Paul also says, “For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed” (1:17a). This “righteousness from God”⁹ results in a right relationship with God.
 4. How can we receive this “righteousness from God?” Can we earn it by our good behavior and/or religious activity? How is faith related to receiving this righteousness?¹⁰
- Paul quotes Habakkuk 2:4 – “the righteous will live by faith.” (NIV, NASB, ESV, KJV). Some scholars translate the phrase “the one who is righteous by faith will live” (RSV, TEV, NLT). This is true. Life (abundant and everlasting) comes through faith (Galatians 2:20).

Reflection/Application

- Paul’s message *may not* be “good news” to you because you do not think you need it, or else you do not believe it is true. Anyway, continue in this study of Romans so you will better understand the basis and content of the Christian worldview and message.
- As a Christian, do you ever feel or act ashamed of the gospel? If so, why? If the gospel is really is the power of God for salvation, you should be eager to proclaim it! Commit to study Romans with a humble heart, and ask God to transform your thinking concerning the gospel, including its power for your daily life.

⁶ ‘long’ – to want to very much; feel a strong desire for

⁷ Many attempted to shame Paul for his proclamation of the gospel. His message was ‘a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles’ (1 Corinthians 1:22-24). Though Paul was opposed by many, he was not ashamed.

⁸ This question will be answered as we continue our study of Romans. In general, salvation includes deliverance from sin and death, including God’s judgment; and provision of wholeness; transformation; and enduring new life.

⁹ literally ‘righteousness of God.’ Interpretations vary. According to traditional Protestant understanding, Paul uses ‘righteousness’ here to denote a ‘right standing’ before God. It comes from the righteous and faithful God through His gracious action. It is His righteousness, or the righteousness of Christ (5:19), and it counts before God.

¹⁰ It is impossible to earn the ‘righteousness from God.’ Rather, this ‘righteousness... is by faith from first to last’ (NIV). It is a gift of God’s grace, received through faith in response to the gospel. This is ‘good news!’