

ROMANS 1-8

VERSE BY VERSE

1-17 Introductory remarks

1:1 Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God,

The book of Romans is written by **Paul**, who calls himself a **servant of Jesus Christ**. Jesus said he would not call us servants, but friends (John 15:15). Yet Paul, as did other apostles and ministers, chose to refer to himself as the “*servant of Jesus Christ*.” It was the *act* of serving that led him to designate himself as a servant. *Servant* is an activity, not a relationship. He was a son who served. One cannot call himself a servant unless he is in the service of God.

He was **called to be an apostle**. Paul did not choose a career, he was chosen by a blinding light, and *called* by a voice like thunder (Acts 9:3). He was **separated unto the gospel of God** by Divine choice before he was born. “*But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood: (Galatians 1:15-16).*” It is called the **gospel of God** to establish its divine authorship and to link it to the old covenant ministry of God to the Jews.

1:2 (Which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures,)

The gospel is not a new religion. It is the fulfillment of what God was doing in the Law and the Prophets. The gospel was clearly predicted by many passages in the Old Testament. There has never been another religious document that has so substantiated itself through fulfilled prophecy. Over 340 prophecies concerning the earthly life of Jesus Christ were recorded in the Old Testament.

...in the holy scriptures.... Different from the modern “scholarly” viewpoint, Paul believed that the copies of the Bible available in His day were *holy* scriptures. To him, inspiration was not limited to the original

autographs.

1:3 Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh;

The prophecies are **concerning** his Son Jesus Christ our Lord. So we see the gospel is not a belief system; it is a person.

This fourfold name (**Son, Jesus, Christ, and Lord**) is a full and complete description of His person and His ministry.

- He relates to the Father as **Son**. Many Old Testament passages speak directly of God's Son: Psalms 2:7-12; Proverbs 30:4; Isaiah 9:6; Zechariah 12:10.
- His name is **Jesus**: "*And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins (Matthew 1:21).*"
- His office is **Christ**, the anointed, Messiah: "*And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God (Matthew 16:16).*"
- In authority, He is **our Lord**. "*Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am (John 13:13).*"

...which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh. He did not begin in the womb, as do other men. According to the Spirit, he was the pre-existent Son of God; **according to the flesh**, he was **made** (by birth) to be the son of David. All Jews understood the prophecies which stated that Messiah would be of the **seed of David**, descended from King David (Jeremiah 23:5; Matthew 21:9; 22:42).

...according to the flesh is defining that which came by natural descent from David. It was only the human nature contained in a body of flesh that the eternal Son of God received from David. He who was before David was **made** to be of the seed of David only in the realm of **flesh**. We have a similar statement in John 1:14: "*The Word was made flesh....*" See also: 1 Timothy 3:16; Philippians 2:8.

1:4 And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead:

Again, Paul is emphasizing that in contrast to there being a point in time at which Jesus was *made* to be the son of David, He did not become the Son of God at his birth. He was simply **declared to be** that which he always had been—**the Son of God**. That God had a son was already revealed in Old Testament scriptures: Psalms 2:7,12; 110:1,4 with Luke 20:41-44; Proverbs 30:4; Isaiah 9:6; Ezekiel 21:9-10; Zechariah 12:10.

...according to the spirit of holiness is understood when we view it as a parallel to "*according to the flesh.*" On the human side, he was *made to be the son of David according to the flesh*. On the Divine side (the pre-existent soul), He was **declared** to be what He always had been in spirit, **the Son of God**. He was made to be the Son of **David**, but simply declared to be the **Son of God**. It was the *flesh* that was made to be of the

seed of David. It was that pre-existent *spirit of holiness* that was declared to be the Son of God. That which did not previously exist was *made*. That which previously existed was simply *declared*.

You will note, by the lack of capitalization, that the King James translators were aware that this *spirit of holiness* was not a reference to the Holy Spirit, but to the personal spirit of the Son of God.

This blending of the two natures, the human (*flesh*) and the Divine (*spirit of holiness*) was revealed with **power, by the resurrection from the dead**. The unprecedented resurrection proved Christ's deity beyond any doubt (2 Peter 1:3; John 10:18).

1:5 By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name:

By whom, not from whom. He is not viewing Christ as the *channel* of grace, but as the *source* of grace.

...we have received grace.... “*For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ (John 1:17).*” Grace is not God's feelings toward us, it is His provision to us. Paul has already informed us in verse 1 that he was *separated unto the gospel of God*. “*But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood (Galatians 1:15-16).*”

In linking **grace and apostleship**, it seems that Paul is further reiterating his unique calling. He was *called to be an apostle* at the same time that he **received the grace** of God in salvation. (Acts 9:15). That same grace further sustains him in service. “*But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me (1 Corinthians 15:10).*”

Paul received grace and was given the office of an apostle that he might bring about **obedience to the faith among all nations**. The emphasis is on **all nations**, as opposed to only Jews. **Obedience** to the faith is not obedience to laws. It is to obey by believing (1 John 3:23).

The *grace and apostleship* leading to *faith among all nations* finds its ultimate purpose **for his name**—that the name of Jesus should be exalted.

1:6 Among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ:

Paul is recognizing the believers in Rome to be among those who have responded to the call to believe. This is significant in that he, as a leading Jew, is going on record as recognizing gentile participation in the calling—something many Jewish Christians were loath to do.

1:7 To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

To all, emphasizing that it is gentiles as well as the Jewish Romans. Men do not become **saints** by their good works. They are **called**, as to an appointed office. It is a title given to one that responds to the call to believe the gospel. The word *saint* (Gk., *hagios*) is the same word translated *Holy* in the proper name Holy Spirit. A saint is *declared* to be holy.

Grace here is not God's attitude toward us, but His provision in Christ. The **peace from God** is not inner peace, not subjective; it is objective peace, as when two parties cease warring and establish peace. This peace is with the **Father** and the **Lord Jesus Christ**. Again he has stated the threefold name of the Son.

1:8 First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.

Since "all roads lead to Rome," the whole world would hear of the strange events occurring when many Romans became Christians. Paul was actively thanking God for their faith.

1:9 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;

"**For God is my witness**" is near to being an oath. Paul is assuring the Romans that he is not lightly speaking when he says that he has been praying for them. He again is careful to state the relationship of God and **his Son**. He further reinforces the fact that the gospel concerns the person of God's Son.

Paul served God, not in the letter of the Law, but with his **spirit**. "*But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter (Romans 7:6).*" See comments under 7:6. Paul had not ceased to pray for the Romans at those times when he prayed.

1:10 Making request, if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you.

When Paul prayed for the Romans, he put in a request **that by any means** (God providing the way) **now at length** (sometime in the future) he **might have a prosperous journey by the will of God** (his coming was contingent upon the will of God) **to come unto** the Romans.

1:11 For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established;

He had a deep desire to come to Rome and use his power as an apostle to impart some spiritual gift that would help them become more grounded in the faith. Romans 11:29, 12:6-8; 1 Corinthians 1:5-7, 7:7, 12:4-11, 13:2; Ephesians 4:7, 8; 1 Timothy 6:17; James 1:17; 1 Peter 4:10; 2 Peter 1:3.

1:12 That is, that I may be comforted together with you by the

mutual faith both of you and me.

If they were established in the faith, it would result in the Roman Christians being able to in turn comfort Paul. He wanted to minister to them that they might minister to him.

1:13 Now I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that oftentimes I purposed to come unto you, (but was let hitherto,) that I might have some fruit among you also, even as among other gentiles.

He wants them to be aware of the fact that on many occasions he sought to come to Rome, but was hindered from doing so. He desired to have spiritual fruit (souls brought to Christ and built up in the faith) among them just as he did among other gentiles.

1:14 I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise.

Paul felt an obligation to the **wise**, educated **Greeks** and to the **unwise**, ignorant heathen, the **Barbarians**. He didn't leave anyone out because of ethnic origin, culture, or education.

1:15 So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also.

He assures them of his willingness and desire to come to them at Rome.

1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

Paul was **not ashamed** to have his gospel tested by those in the political and cultural centers of the world. His good news was more than words to tickle the ears or platitudes to inspire. When men's philosophies and religions are put to the test, they often fail to perform as promised, shaming the proponent. But the gospel had repeatedly proven itself to be the **power of God** to effect real **salvation**. It did not 'impart' power; the message itself was the power of God in action. Men didn't have to apply it; it applied itself to the men who heard it. It carried its own power to save all that believed.

Paul does not state that the gospel included the power to "cause" men to believe, as Calvinism teaches; rather, belief was a precondition, wholly the responsibility of the sinner, which belief then released the power of God to effect salvation.

This power of the gospel extended to **everyone** that believeth. To offer the gospel to everyone was uniquely different from the tribal religions and national gods of his time. The Jew felt that Jehovah was their exclusive God—to know Him, you must become a Jew.

...to everyone that believeth, both Jew and Greek. He was never ashamed, not only because his gospel was effectual, but because its sole

requirement, *believe*, was a condition everyone could meet.

He was not ashamed to offer it as a sure hope to the **unwise** heathen and to the **wise** Greek. It was not based upon, nor did it depend upon, wisdom; yet it proved to be wiser than the wisdom of men. Nor was it hindered from working just as effectually when received by the **unwise** and the **Barbarian**.

...to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. The Jew was first in order because they had first received the oracles of the Law (Romans 3:2). The Jew was first in opportunity because Paul found it strategically advantageous to offer the gospel to the **Jews** before going to the **Greeks**. Through their knowledge of the old covenant types and sacrifices, the Jews were prepared to understand and believe. Romans 1:17

1:17 For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.

For therein (in the events and message of this gospel, which he is not ashamed to preach to the Romans) **is the righteousness of God revealed.** As seen in parallel passages, this righteousness is: without Law (Romans 3:21), not to be our own (10:3), to be from God (Philippians 3:9), and a gift of God (5:17). See 3:21-22.

Paul, like all devout Jews, was jealous on behalf of the **righteousness of God**. Other religions lowered their standards for fellowship with God. They did not satisfy the legal demands of a justly offended Deity. The very suggestion that a sinner could be admitted into fellowship with God on any basis other than righteousness was unthinkable to a religious Jew. It would degrade God's holiness to suggest that He would accept less.

In light of the Jew's concern to guard the righteousness of God, Paul is not ashamed of the gospel, for it is even more effective than Mt. Sinai in revealing the *righteousness of God*. The gospel Paul is about to declare in the book of Romans does not lower the Law's standards, rather it raises the standards so high that only one man can meet them. The gospel demonstrates how God was able to remain righteous while remitting the sins of the old covenant believer. See 3:25-26.

The gospel is the declaration that the righteousness God requires has been provided as a gift to the believer.

The gospel further manifests righteousness by enabling the one who has had righteousness imputed to him to actually do the righteousness that was heretofore unattainable under the Law. See 8:3-4.

In the preaching of the gospel, the righteousness of God **is revealed from faith to faith**—old covenant faith to new covenant faith, Jewish faith to gentile faith, imparting faith to imputing faith. "*Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith (Romans 3:30).*" The righteousness of God is manifested in the salvation of old covenant Jews, as well as in the salvation of church-age gentiles. Under the old covenant, faith was only a small bud