



“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” (Romans 1:16).

The Gospel According to Paul

Lesson Truth: Romans presents the power of God to save.

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The epistle of Paul the apostle to the Romans is the entire New Testament in summary. Every major doctrine of the Christian faith is mentioned there. If the Bible were a ring, the epistle to the Romans would be its paramount gem.

The epistle was written by Saul of Tarsus who, by the grace of God, became *“Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God”* (Romans 1:1). Educated in Gentile learning in Tarsus, he was trained in the religion of Israel as a Pharisee. He was converted by divine intervention without human instrumentality (Acts 9). He was taught the gospel by direct revelation (Galatians 1:11, 12). By his early education, his miraculous conversion, his divine instruction, his natural disposition, and the grace of God, he became the greatest expositor of the Christian faith who has ever lived.

The epistle was written to Christian believers in Rome, both Jew and Gentile, in approximately A.D. 58 or 59, from Corinth. There is no question but that the present book of Romans is from the pen of the great apostle.

The theme of the epistle is *“The Righteousness of God for Unrighteous Men.”* It deals with the great subjects of sin, condemnation, atonement, justification, sanctification, sovereignty, election, and practical Christian living. Romans is a book of great treasure waiting to enrich the person who studies it. In thirteen lessons we will review the epistle of Paul the apostle to the Romans in the light of its key verse, 1:17.

I. THE WRITER

According to the custom of correspondence in that day, the writer puts his name first. He introduces himself simply as “*Paul.*” How much history is behind that name!

He is the Saul of Tarsus who was once “*breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord*” and considered no effort to be too great if it would stamp out the faith (Acts 9:1). He is the man chosen of God for a special ministry (Acts 9:15). He is the apostle to the Gentiles whose name was changed from the Hebrew (Saul) to the Greek (Paulos) because of the areas of his ministry.

Three statements explain the man and his ministry. (1) He is a “*servant*” (bondslave) of Jesus Christ. (2) He is called an “*apostle*” of Jesus Christ, commissioned to be His ambassador to the nations. (3) He is “*separated*” to the gospel of God in that all else is secondary. Preaching the gospel is his one goal and involvement in life. No wonder God used Paul. He will use any person who is so qualified for Christian service.

This is the same Paul who wrote approximately one half of the New Testament. Of his thirteen books (or fourteen if Hebrews is Pauline in authorship), Romans is the crowning jewel.

II. THE MESSAGE

Romans 1:1-5 gives four elements in the message of this epistle. You can see these appearing once and again through all sixteen chapters.

A. Here is “*the gospel of God*” (verse 1). How is it “*of God*”? (1) It is good news which comes from God. He is the origin of the gospel. (2) It is good news which tells of God. He is the subject of the gospel.

In subject, it is “*the gospel of Jesus Christ*” (Mark 1:1). In essence, it is “*the gospel of the grace of God*” (Acts 20:24). In revelation, it is “*the glorious gospel of Christ*” (II Corinthians 4:4). In effect, it is “*the gospel of peace*” (Ephesians 6: 15). In revelation, it is “*the glorious gospel of the blessed God*” (1 Timothy 1:11). In duration, it is “*the everlasting gospel*” (Revelation 14:6). What a message!

B. Here is the fulfillment of prophecy “*which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures*” (verse 2). The person and work of Jesus Christ, His message and ministry, were not new. It was as God had purposed from eternity and proclaimed through His prophets (John 1:45). Many times Matthew uses such expressions as this: “*that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying. . .*” (Matthew

2:15). Jesus said, “*All things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me*” (Luke 24:44). That is what we find expressed in doctrinal principles in Romans.

C. Here is the revelation of Jesus (verses 3, 4). Look at what is said about Him. (1) His humanity is evident, for He was born “*of the seed of David.*” That was when “*the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us*” (John 1:14). In very truth, He was God “*manifest in the flesh*” (I Timothy 3:16). (2) His deity is declared. He is “*the Son of God with power*” as evidenced by His “*spirit of holiness*” and His “*resurrection from the dead*” (verse 4). That is the marvel in the words of the apostle John, “*The Word was God. . . . And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth*” (John 1:1, 14).

The message of the epistle to the Romans is not a treatise on uninteresting theology. It is a presentation of the incarnate Son of God, our Savior.

D. Here is the fulfillment of a commission. “*We have received grace and apostleship, for obedience*” (verse 5). God has graced us by saving us and calling us to be His messengers. It is a privilege to represent Him. It is a responsibility to be commissioned by Him. It is our goal to bring all nations to the obedience of faith in Jesus Christ. That is one purpose of the epistle to the Romans.

III. THE RECIPIENTS

A. To whom was the epistle addressed? “*To all that be in Rome*” (verse 7) does not include the population of the entire city. The epistle was addressed to the Christians who lived in that great metropolitan center. The recipients are identified by their privilege (“called of Jesus Christ”), by their status (“beloved of God”), and by their position (“saints”). They had received the effectual calling of God which had brought the response of repentance and faith. That is how they became Christians. As new creatures in Christ Jesus, born and indwelt by the Holy Spirit, they were the beloved children of God. Being set apart as belonging to God, they were saints (sanctified ones). Their residence was in Rome, but their position was in Christ.

B. What blessings were desired for them? Verse 7 speaks of the content and the source of the blessing Paul desired for the Roman Christians. In content, the blessing was “*grace. . . and peace.*” Grace was the cause; peace was the effect. Grace came first; peace followed. No greater blessing

could be received.

In source, the blessings of grace and peace came *“from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.”* The Father was the source and Jesus was the channel through which grace and peace came to them then as it comes to us now.

Roman Christians lived in the very center of a pagan empire. The emperor called himself Caesar and declared himself to be a god. An act of worship was required of citizens in which they would say, “Caesar is Lord.” But Christians knew that Jesus is Lord. It was a serious thing to confess Jesus as Lord in the Roman Empire. Those who did so confess were the recipients of this epistle to the Romans.

IV. THE SPIRIT

A. There is a spirit of fellowship which binds all Christians together. Paul expressed that in Romans 1 by thanking God for the believers (verse 8), by praying for the believers (verse 9), by desiring to visit with the believers (verse 10), by sharing the ministry of the believers (verse 15), and by writing to confirm the faith of the believers. What an interest he took in a group of believers whom he had never met! That is what Christian fellowship is all about. It has a concern about believers whose face one has never seen (Colossians 2:1-3). And it thanks God repeatedly for those who are known personally (Philippians 1:1-7).

B. There is a sense of universal obligation which motivates all Christians. *“I am debtor,”* Paul wrote (verse 14). The Greeks and barbarians included the civilized and uncivilized people of that day. Wise and unwise included the educated and the uneducated of that day. Whatever one's location, culture, or condition in life, the Christian has a commission from Jesus to get the gospel into that person's hearing. The weak and strong, those who know God's law and those who do not know God's law, as well as the Jew and the Gentile share the same need. That is why Paul wrote, *“I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some”* (I Corinthians 9:22). Do you feel the need to share Christ with people you know? It is the universal obligation of every believer.

C. There is a readiness to witness which motivates all Christians. The apostle Peter expressed it this way: *“Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear”* (I Peter 3:15). The key is to acknowledge the lordship of Jesus Christ, holding Him in reverence and honoring Him. Your witness will follow. Speaking for Christ

is as natural for a Christian as breathing, if Jesus is sanctified as Lord in the heart.

D. There is an assurance of the gospel message which motivates all Christians. Read Romans 1:16, 17 again. Look at five truths indicated there.

(1) The message of Jesus is “*gospel*,” good news. Since forgiveness of sin and peace with God come through Jesus Christ, it is called “*the gospel of Christ*.” What better news can one receive than that guilty and condemned sinners can be forgiven and accepted in peace before God? It is such good news that we are constrained in our spirits to tell it.

(2) The message is that the saving power of God is working through Jesus Christ. The gospel is not just the power of God; it is the power of God which effects salvation.

(3) The message is that the saving power of God is effective to anyone and everyone who trusts Jesus. Not by works but by faith salvation is received.

(4) The message is that the saving power of God through faith in Jesus Christ is the way one receives the righteousness of God. One becomes as righteous as God is because God's own righteousness is imputed to him.

(5) The message is that the saving power of God which brings the righteousness of God by faith in Jesus Christ is now available to you. You can be saved. You can be saved now. You can be saved and know it. You can be saved forever. That is the gospel of Jesus Christ. “*This is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you*” (1 Peter 1:25).

Questions

1. Where is Rome?
2. What is the epistle to the Romans?
3. What is the theme of that epistle?
4. How does the writer introduce himself in Romans 1:1?
5. How does the epistle describe the gospel?
6. How does it show the humanity and deity of Jesus?
7. How are the recipients of the epistle described?
8. What is the obligation expressed in Romans 1:14?
9. How is the Christian message described in Romans 1:16, 17?
10. How can you share the gospel with someone this week?

