



Lesson 3

The Gospel Defined Romans 1.1-17

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek”

Romans 1.16

The Greeting (vss. 1-7)

Romans 1:1–7 (NASB95)

1Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God,
2which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures,
3concerning His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh,
4who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord,
5through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for His name's sake,
6among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ;
7to all who are beloved of God in Rome, called as saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

1. Compare with other of Paul's greetings. Eph. 1:1-2; Phil. 1:1-2; Col. 1:1-2; 1Thess. 1:1. All of these greetings share a common structure:
 - Paul introduces himself (and any associates)
 - Paul states who he is addressing
 - Paul greets them with grace and peace.
 - These same elements are found in Romans, but there is much more said in the Romans introduction than in the others. This material is significant in setting the tone of Paul's message.
2. The gospel defined:
 - **The gospel and Paul's calling.** He makes it clear in vs. 1 that his calling to be an apostle was for the purposes of the gospel. Looking at Paul's conversion accounts we see that this entailed his mission to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15; 22:15,21; 26:16-18; cf. Gal. 1:15-16). We see this also in vs. 5.
 - » This gospel (including acceptance of the Gentiles) was not a Pauline invention, but one of God's promise through the prophets (vs. 2) An example of this is found in vs. 3-4. According to the flesh, Jesus was of David's seed (see Jer. 23:5-6; Ezek. 34:23-31; etc.) He was the Jewish Messiah. However, according to the Holy Spirit He was God's Son. This brings to our minds the prophecy of Psalm 2:7-8. The Son of God was not simply a Jewish Messiah, but Lord of the nations!

- » In describing himself as Jesus' slave in vs. 1, Paul may have been alluding to another prophecy, the promise of God's Servant who would restore Israel and the nations (Isaiah 49:1-8). No, Paul was not claiming to be the Servant of prophecy, but as slave to Christ he was aiding in His work.
 - **The gospel's aim** was to "bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for His name's sake."
 - » True faith responds! Paul NEVER took issue with the necessity of obeying whatever God said. The issue that Paul will have with Law in this letter is to be seen as the tension between Jewish national sanctification (via Law) and the universal gospel message of justification via the gospel (i.e. obedient faith in Christ).
 - » There may be an intended contrast here between Jewish obedience to Law (i.e. circumcision, sabbath, etc.) and saving, obedient faith in Christ. Paul's point again is that the gospel that teaches obedient faith was to be made available to all the nations.
 - » This was "for His name's sake." Thought seems to be that Gentile acceptance of the gospel would bring glory to Christ's name (see Romans 15:9). Contrast with Jewish disobedience in Romans 2:24.
 - **Gospel (vs. 1-4) = obedience of faith (vs. 5) = part of the called, beloved & saints (vs. 6-7).**
 - » All of these are terms that the Jews took for themselves, but through the gospel they are extended to the nations. Not by Law, but through the gospel.
 - » This understanding will help us with such passages as Romans 8:28-30.
3. In short, the gospel as defined in these verses is the fulfillment of God's promise that salvation could come to all (both Jew and Gentile). The gospel should produce "the obedience of faith" in those who hear (both Jew and Gentile), resulting in their being part of God's called people, His beloved, His saints.

Paul's Desire To Visit (vss. 8-15)

Romans 1:8-15 (NASB95)

8First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, because your faith is being proclaimed throughout the whole world.

9For God, whom I serve in my spirit in the preaching of the gospel of His Son, is my witness as to how unceasingly I make mention of you,

10always in my prayers making request, if perhaps now at last by the will of God I may succeed in coming to you.

11For I long to see you so that I may impart some spiritual gift to you, that you may be established;

12that is, that I may be encouraged together with you while among you, each of us by the other's faith, both yours and mine.

13I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that often I have planned to come to you (and have been prevented so far) so that I may obtain some fruit among you also, even as among the rest of the Gentiles.

14I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish.

15So, for my part, I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.

1. They had been in his prayers (vs. 8-10). Paul both thanked God for their faith, and petitioned God that he could finally visit these saints. We know that Paul planned to visit them (Romans 15:22-24; Acts 19:21).
2. Paul was assured that if he visited them, both parties would be encouraged by the faith of the other (vs. 11-12)
3. The reason Paul hoped to visit: to reap fruit (vs. 13-15)
 - Ties back with his apostolic commission. His whole purpose was to reap fruit for Christ, so his hope was to do that in Rome as well.
 - Paul was indebted to the Gentiles. Not that Paul was in debt to them, but he was in debt to Christ his Lord! Again, it was the Lord's will that Paul carry His gospel to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15; 22:15,21; 26:16-18)
 - Thus, Paul's true desire to visit Rome was tied to Jesus' desire for him to carry the Gospel to the Gentiles.

Theme Of The Letter (vss. 16-17)

Romans 1:16-17 (NASB95)

16For 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.

17For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "BUT THE RIGHTEOUS man SHALL LIVE BY FAITH."

1. Why would anyone be ashamed of the gospel? If by "gospel" we simply mean God's ability to save, it's hard to imagine anyone being ashamed of it. However, in context of what we've already read, "gospel" involves God's promised plan to incorporate the Gentiles into His saved people. Others of Jewish background would find this offensive and shameful. In fact, we have a recorded incident where another apostle was "ashamed" by this gospel (see Galatians 2:11-14).
2. However, in view of his obligation to the Gentiles, his apostolic commission, Paul was not ashamed of the gospel. He knew that this was God's power by which both Jew and Gentile could be saved. It is God's power to any who will believe.
3. It is in the gospel that God's righteousness is revealed.
 - This phrase has been the source of much debate and confusion. For Luther, Calvin and a host of others the "righteousness of God" was seen as man's inability to stand right before his God. Since no man can do that of his own accord, he is dependant on God to make him righteous. Such theories as Calvin's imputed righteousness (i.e. Christ's righteousness is imputed to us) are the result.
 - However, it is more in keeping with the Old Testament to speak of God's righteousness as "his loyalty and faithfulness to his own promise/covenant word," (McClister).
 - In other words, the "righteousness of God" is His keeping the promises He made to save the Jews and the Gentiles (see again Isaiah 49:1-8). It is in the gospel that His promise is kept. It is in the gospel that God is faithful to His promise.
4. The phrase "from faith to faith" is difficult and many interpretations are given. But in light of what we've already discussed, the best meaning seems to be, "from God's faithfulness (to his

covenant promises) to man's response of faith.”

5. Paul concludes the thought with a supporting Scripture. Habakkuk 2:4 is again understood in terms of God keeping His promises. In Habakkuk's day the promise was that God would save His faithful ones, even as the Babylonians were poised to destroy the nations. God kept His promise then, He keeps it now. His righteousness (covenant faithfulness) is fully revealed in the gospel.