

ROMANS 1:1-17

1) Where, in the larger context of the whole of Romans, does this passage occur?

- Introduction to the letter
- Many of the themes mentioned in vv. 1-7 are also mentioned in the closing doxology (16:25-27): (1) Paul's apostolic authority; (2) the fulfillment of the OT in the gospel; (3) the gospel that centers on Jesus Christ; (4) the obedience of faith; (5) the mission to the Gentiles; and (6) the glory of Jesus Christ and God the Father.

2) Trace the structure of the passage by dividing it up into sub-sections.

- Greeting (vv. 1-7)
- Thanksgiving (vv. 8-15)
- Theme (vv. 16-17)

Greeting: The Content and Goal of Gospel Ministry (1:1-7)

3) How does Paul describe himself in v. 1?

- "Servant of Christ Jesus": connotes total devotion, obedience, humility to God's promised Messiah, Jesus
- "Called to be an apostle" → Paul speaks with the authority of one who has seen the risen Christ
- "Set apart for the gospel of God" – What does this mean?
 - Paul says his life is totally dedicated to God's act of salvation in Christ—a dedication that involves believing, obeying, and proclaiming the gospel.
 - "Of God" reminds us that the gospel is about how God has acted to bring salvation, how his righteousness and justice are preserved, how his purposes are worked out in history, and how he can be served by his people.
 - Paul uses the words "gospel" or "preach the gospel" 12 times in Romans (1:1, 9, 15, 16; 2:16; 10:15, 16; 11:28; 15:16, 19, 20; 16:25). These words "bookend" the letter, appearing at the beginning and at the end. This shows how important the gospel is to this letter.

4) According to v. 2, how is the Old Testament related to the gospel?

- "Holy Scriptures" = the OT
- The gospel was promised in the OT. There is continuity between the OT and the gospel of Jesus Christ. The *entire* Bible bears witness to the person and work of Jesus (cf. Luke 24:27, 44-45), and to *one* way of salvation—through faith alone in Christ alone.
- Jesus fulfils the OT. Christ does not change the meaning of the OT; rather he is the key to understanding what the OT really means.

5) How does this shape our understanding of the Old Testament? Why is the OT so important?

- The gospel cannot be understood from the NT alone, but needs the OT as well. In fact, Paul demonstrates the truth of the gospel by quoting the OT (eg. Rom. 4)

Digging Deeper:

The Old Testament is fundamentally about God’s promise to bless the world through a descendant of Abraham and David. This promised descendant will rule as God’s king and bring about the restoration of all things. The many stories of the OT constitute a single Story. And this Story is about the reclamation of a lost human dominion over the world—lost because of the fall of mankind into sin—through a Davidic dynasty. In short, it is about the coming of the kingdom of God.

Key OT promises:

- The promise of a woman’s seed (Gen. 3:15)
- The promise of a descendant of Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3; 15:5; 17:5-6)
- The promise of a descendant of David (2 Sam. 7:12-16; Ps. 89; 132; Isa. 11:1-5; Jer. 23:5-6; Ezek. 34:23-24)

6) What is the gospel about? What do verses 3-4 tell us about Jesus?

- “Concerning his Son”
 - The gospel is centred on Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God

Descended	appointed
from David	to be the Son of God in power
according to the flesh	according to the Spirit of holiness
	by his resurrection from the dead

- Jesus was “descended from David according to the flesh”
 - Jesus as the Son of David fulfilled the promise made in the OT regarding a future king from David’s line.
 - “Flesh” is contrasted with “Spirit” (v. 4): Jesus came in the weakness of the flesh. In the incarnation, he humbled himself and took on a body of weakness.
- Jesus was “*appointed* to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead”
 - “Appointed” is a better translation of the original Greek word than “declared”(ESV, NIV, NASB). The word means something like “crowned” or “exalted”.
 - So the resurrection changed the status of Jesus. When he lived on earth, Jesus was the Son of God. But he became the Son of God *in power* after his resurrection. Upon his resurrection, Jesus was enthroned as the messianic king. The Holy Spirit raised him from a body of weakness to a resurrection body of power (cf. Phil. 2:6-11).
 - The resurrection of Jesus inaugurates the new age. When Jesus lived on earth as the Son of David, he lived his life in the old age of the flesh that was

characterized by weakness, sin, and death. At his resurrection, however, Jesus left the old age behind and inaugurated the new age of the Spirit.

- “Jesus Christ our *Lord*”
 - He is God’s anointed King who rules over all of creation. He is the Lord of all nations.

Digging Deeper:

The idea that Jesus was enthroned as the messianic King is also found in Acts (see Acts 2:32-36). Peter concludes from Jesus’ resurrection from the dead that “God has made him both Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:36). Paul connects the resurrection of Jesus with his installation as God’s Son by citing Psalm 2:7 in Acts 13:33: “God has fulfilled the promise to us their children by raising Jesus, as also it is written in the second Psalm, ‘You are my son, today I have begotten you.’”

7) What is the purpose of Paul’s apostolic ministry, which he received through Jesus Christ? What is its ultimate goal?

- “To bring about the obedience of faith” (cf. Rom. 16:26)
 - Obedience is required, but it is an obedience that flows from saving faith and is always connected to ongoing faith. Although Paul can speak of people’s initial response as obeying the gospel (Rom. 10:16), it is unlikely that “obedience of faith” here refers only to initial saving faith, because the purpose of Paul’s apostleship was not merely to bring people to conversion but also to bring about transformed lives that were consistently obedient to God.
 - Paul called men and women to a faith in Christ that was always *inseparable* from obedience—for the Saviour in whom we believe is nothing less than our Lord. Obedience can never be divorced from faith, because we can obey Jesus as Lord only when we have given ourselves to him in faith, trusting in him alone to save us from our sins.
- The scope of Paul’s ministry is “among the nations”—it encompasses the Gentiles
- “For the sake of his name”
 - The goal of Paul’s ministry is to glorify Jesus Christ, to exalt Christ’s reputation and honor among the Gentiles

8) How does the example of Paul’s apostolic ministry shape how you live and serve?

- Obedience in the Christian life flows from faith in Jesus Christ. Without faith in Christ, there can be no genuine obedience. On the other hand, obedience is the evidence of genuine faith in Christ. If a person’s life is characterized by disobedience, then there can be no true faith in Christ.
- The work of the gospel is not confined to initial evangelization but also includes building up churches so that Christians grow in Christ-like obedience

Thanksgiving: Gratitude and Encouragement from the Gospel (1:8-15)

9) What is Paul thankful for? How is this significant?

- The faith of the Roman Christians is “proclaimed in all the world”
- The recipients of his letter are Christians (1:7)
- Paul is thankful for how the gospel is bearing fruit in the lives of the Romans.
- *“The sharing of faith leads to harmony and mutual encouragement, whereas boasting of works divides. When we speak of our works we puff ourselves up, we want people to give glory to us, for our initiative, achievement or virtue. This always leads to strife, as everyone knows from the school playground onwards. But when we speak of our faith, we proclaim the goodness of Jesus. Our faith is the conclusive proof that we contribute nothing and God does everything.”* (Christopher Ash)
- Are we thankful for the spiritual growth of other Christians? How are we investing in other Christians for their growth and encouragement?

10) What is Paul praying for? Why?

- Paul prays that God would give him an opportunity to visit the Christians in Rome
- He longs to see them so that he might:
 - Impart some spiritual gift to strengthen them (v. 11)
 - Enjoy mutual encouragement (v. 12)
 - Reap some harvest among the Romans (v. 13)
 - Preach the gospel to the Romans (v. 15)

11) Why would Paul preach the gospel to people who were already Christians? What implications does this have for us?

- For Paul, the gospel is not just a call to initial saving faith but also a call to continue in a daily walk of faith. “Preaching the gospel” refers to the ongoing work of teaching and discipleship that builds on initial evangelization.
- The preaching of the gospel strengthens and encourages *believers*.
- Paul’s first aim is to preach the gospel to the Christians, because he knows this will build up the church in unity, love, godliness, and zeal. As the gospel changes them, so they will reach out humbly and eagerly to love and serve others.
- Christians ought to never tire of hearing the gospel! Hearing the gospel encourages us and spurs our growth.

Theme: The Gospel of God’s Righteousness (1:16-17)

12) Why is Paul eager to preach the gospel in Rome?

- Because he is not ashamed of the gospel

13) Why is Paul not ashamed of the gospel?

- Because it is “the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek”.

- “Salvation” refers to the deliverance from God’s judgment at the last day, as well as generally God’s provision for our spiritual need.
- This salvation is for “everyone who believes” —All who have faith in Christ are saved from God’s wrath.
- Jew first indicates the priority of the Jews in salvation history and their election as God’s people. The role of the Jews is a major issue in Romans, as seen especially in the discussion in chs. 9–11. Greek is not limited here to people from Greece but refers to all Gentiles.

14) Why is the gospel the “power of God for salvation”?

- Because it reveals “the righteousness of God”

15) What is “the righteousness of God”?

- This important expression is used eight times in Romans (1:17; 3:5, 21, 22, 25, 26; 10:3), and once elsewhere in Paul’s letters (2 Cor. 5:21).
- The righteousness of God refers to:
 - An attribute of God’s character. It refers directly to God’s right moral character, particularly manifested in his holiness and justice. In himself, God is just, true, utterly fair, consistent, glorious and holy. His righteousness is the utter rightness of his character, right to the core of his glorious being.
 - An activity of God. It refers to the way God saves sinners through Christ’s death and resurrection, which meets the just demand of God’s holy nature. The gospel reveals how God has acted to save sinners (cf. Rom. 3:21). In the OT, God’s righteousness refers often to the saving action of God (Ps. 98:2; Isa. 46:13; 51:8). In these OT passages, “righteousness” and “salvation” are mentioned in parallel.
 - A status of being right with God. It means primarily “righteousness *from* God,” so that it denotes right standing before God (a legal reality) that is graciously given to people by God (cf. Rom. 3:21-22; 10:3; 2 Cor. 5:21; Phil. 3:9). Being right with God concerns an instantaneous change in status before God and not inner moral transformation. It is a legal declaration where God pronounces us righteous, not guilty.

16) What does “from faith for faith” mean? Why is it so critical to understand this?

- It probably means that right standing with God is by faith from start to finish. It emphasizes that only faith *alone* in Christ can bring us into right relationship with God.

17) How does Paul support statement?

- “As it is written” – Paul quotes from the OT (Habakkuk 2:4)

Digging Deeper:

When the NT writers quote the OT, they bring out the full meaning that the OT text originally had. So it is always helpful to look up any OT quotation in its context.

In Habakkuk 2, the believer waits for the appointed time when God's promises will be fulfilled. There are two possible responses: Some will be puffed up (Hab. 2:4a) with a proud self-sufficiency that thinks it can cope on its own. By contrast, "the righteous" (that is, those who believe the promises) "will live by his faith". His believing the promise will both bring him into right relation with God (the main emphasis in Romans), and also keep him in right relation (the emphasis in Heb. 10:38).

Faith is taking God at his word. The opposite of faith is proud self-sufficiency. The life of faith is all-encompassing: it is by faith that one initially receives the gift of salvation (eternal life), but it is also by faith that one lives each day.

18) Based on Romans 1:1-17, how would you explain the gospel?

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

- 1) The gospel is centred on the person and work of Jesus Christ. Do you know who Jesus is and what he came to do? Have you trusted in him?
- 2) Paul was completely committed to believing, obeying and proclaiming the gospel. How might we also live such a gospel-centred life? Be specific.
- 3) In our relationships with other Christians, how much are we singing and speaking the praises of Jesus? How can we encourage one another more through the gospel?
- 4) Why might we be ashamed of the gospel? How can we overcome this?
- 5) How has studying this Scriptural passage deepened your understanding of the gospel? What impact will this have on how you think about and live as a Christian?

Studying God's Word

Four key questions to ask:

- 1) What does the text say? [OBSERVE]
 - Take careful note of the content of the Bible passage
- 2) What does the text mean? [INTERPRET]
 - The aim is to discover the biblical author's *intention* or *purpose* in writing this particular passage of Scripture. In other words, *why* does the text say what it says?
- 3) What is (are) the main point(s) of the text? [INTERPRET]
- 4) What implications does the text have for: [APPLY]
 - The non-Christian;
 - The Individual Christian; and
 - The church?

OUTLINE OF ROMANS

I. Introduction (1:1-17)

- A. Salutation (1:1-7)
- B. Thanksgiving (1:8-15)
- C. Statement of theme (1:16-17)

II. The Heart of the Gospel: Justification by Faith (1:18-4:25)

- A. The universal reign of sin (1:18-3:20)
- B. Justification by faith (3:21-4:25)

III. The Assurance Provided by the Gospel: The Hope of Salvation (5:1-8:39)

- A. The hope of glory (5:1-21)
- B. Freedom from bondage to sin (6:1-23)
- C. Freedom from bondage to the law (7:1-25)
- D. Assurance of eternal life in the Spirit (8:1-30)
- E. The believer's security celebrated (8:31-39)

IV. The Defense of the Gospel: The Problem of Israel (9:1-11:36)

- A. Introduction: The tension between God's promises and Israel's plight (9:1-5)
- B. Defining the promise: (1) God's sovereign election (9:6-29)
- C. Understanding Israel's plight: Christ as the climax of salvation history (9:30-10:21)
- D. Summary: Israel, the "elect", and the "hardened" (11:1-10)
- E. Defining the promise (2): The future of Israel (11:11-32)
- F. Conclusion: Praise to God in light of his awesome plan (11:33-36)

V. The Transforming Power of the Gospel: Christian Conduct (12:1-15:13)

- A. The heart of the matter: Total transformation (12:1-2)
- B. Humility and mutual service (12:3-8)
- C. Love and its manifestations (12:9-21)
- D. The Christian and secular rulers (13:1-7)
- E. Love and the law (13:8-10)
- F. Living in light of the day (13:11-14)
- G. A plea for unity (14:1-15:13)

VI. The Letter Closing (15:14-16:27)

- A. Paul's ministry and travel plans (15:14-33)
- B. Greetings (16:1-23)
- C. Concluding doxology (16:25-27)