

Exegetical Notes, Romans 1:1-17

“To Rome”

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Introduction to Romans: In the year 57, Paul was in the city of Corinth. He was preparing to go to Jerusalem to bring to that struggling church the offerings he had taken for them. He wanted to go to Rome to visit the church in that city, but he knew that his trip to Rome would be delayed until after his visit to Jerusalem.

Though Paul had been the founder of many churches, he was not the founder of the church in Rome. Its origins are unknown to us. Paul was writing to a church which he did not know. His purpose was to explain to them the basis of Christian doctrine and, in particular, the doctrine of salvation by faith alone.

Because Paul’s purpose was doctrinal, Romans is a systematic theological work more so than any other book in the New Testament.

Romans 1:1-17

Verses 1-7

Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God—² the gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures³ regarding his Son, who as to his earthly life was a descendant of David,⁴ and who through the Spirit of holiness was appointed the Son of God in power by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord.

⁵ Through him we received grace and apostleship to call all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith for his name’s sake. ⁶ And you also are among those Gentiles who are called to belong to Jesus Christ.

⁷ To all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be his holy people:

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

- As in all Greek letters of the time, the signature of the writer appears first in the letter. The author of this work was Paul. This Paul describes himself as a “servant of Christ Jesus.” The Greek word translated servant is the word “doulos.” In common use, it means slave (one who literally belongs to

another and who has no freedom apart from the will of the one who owns him). Paul says that his owner, Christ Jesus, has called him to be an Apostle (the word means “sent one.” In the early church this was the highest office of leadership. Though Paul claimed this title, some disputed his right to use it). Paul claims that he has been “set apart for the gospel of God.” His owner, Christ Jesus, has set him apart to carry the good news of salvation. He is a slave to Jesus and, as such, must surrender his life to the will of Jesus, his master/owner. No one disputes that this Paul is the great Apostle Paul.

- Paul says that the good news he carries to the world was “promised by God” through the ancient prophets of Israel in the “Holy Scriptures.” He means that the story of Jesus coming to earth is found in the Old Testament writings of Israel’s prophets. Therefore, he will refer to the writings of the prophets throughout Romans to prove his claims about Jesus.
- Paul declares the dual nature of Christ Jesus. Jesus was human and divine. This is proven by Jesus’ resurrection from the dead.
- Jesus is the central figure in the story of our salvation. The Christians in Rome are, like Paul, called to serve Jesus and that obedience to Jesus arises from their faith in who Jesus is, the son of God and the son of man.
- Then Paul lists the address of the letter. It is written to the Christians in Rome.

Verses 8-15

First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is being reported all over the world. ⁹ God, whom I serve in my spirit in preaching the gospel of his Son, is my witness how constantly I remember you ¹⁰ in my prayers at all times; and I pray that now at last by God’s will the way may be opened for me to come to you.

¹¹ I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong— ¹² that is, that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other’s faith. ¹³ I do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, that I planned many times to come to you (but have been prevented from doing so until now) in order that I might have a harvest among you, just as I have had among the other Gentiles.

¹⁴ I am obligated both to Greeks and non-Greeks, both to the wise and the foolish. ¹⁵ That is why I am so eager to preach the gospel also to you who are in Rome.

- Paul wants the Roman Christians to know that, even though he has never visited them, he prays for them and longs to visit with them. He wants to visit them in order that they may mutually strengthen and encourage each other. It is the strong desire of his heart to come to Rome, but so far circumstances have made that visit impossible.

Verses 16-17

¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile. ¹⁷ For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: “The righteous will live by faith.”

- THESE VERSES EXPRESS THE THEME OF THE ENTIRE BOOK OF ROMANS!
- Paul is NOT ASHAMED of the Gospel. He will boldly declare it even in the city of Rome no matter what the cost of that proclamation.
- Paul will preach the Gospel because it BRINGS SALVATION to EVERYONE who believes. If you believe the Gospel you will be saved by your faith in Jesus Christ. This power to be saved was first sent to the Jews, but it is now presented to non-Jews as well, and it will save both Jew and non-Jew if it is believed.
- Paul declares that salvation is a gift offered by God. It is received “by faith, from first to last.” There is no other way to receive salvation but through the Gospel. To be saved you must believe that God sent Jesus to save you. There is no other door to heaven except Jesus Christ.

(These exegetical notes are the foundational study for the sermon entitled *To Rome*. They have been prepared by the Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen, Interim Senior/Lead Pastor at Cornerstone Fellowship, Coatesville Pennsylvania. All rights are reserved by *Cornerstone Fellowship* & The Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen. They are used here by permission.)