

The Epistle of Paul to the *Romans*

Greetings and Introduction (1:1-15)

1:1-4 Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God – the gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures regarding his Son, who as to his human nature was a descendant of David, and who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead: **Jesus Christ our Lord**. Paul made it very clear from the beginning of this letter who he was: a “servant” and an “apostle”, and what the focus of his message would be: “the gospel of God”. The Greek word for “gospel” (*euangelion*) literally means “good news”, which Paul presented as the result of his being “called” (“chosen” Acts 9:15) by the Lord. The gospel was a promise from God Acts 13:32-33, Titus 1:1-3 that was presented “through His prophets” Isaiah 53:10-11, Romans 3:21-22, and contained the Son of God’s heavenly and earthly heritages John 1:1,14, Matthew 1:1, as well as His sacrificial death and resurrection Luke 23:44 – 24:49.

The name Paul (a Roman name from the Latin: *Paulus*) meant “small” or “humble”. He grew up with the Hebrew name *Saul*, which meant “desired” or “prayed for”. His name change was first mentioned when Luke stated that Paul was “filled with the Holy Spirit” Acts 13:9.

The Greek word (*doulos*) translated “servant” v.1 actually means “slave”. In this instance, Paul was using this word in its Hebrew sense to describe a servant/slave who willingly committed to serve a master they loved and respected: a bond servant/slave Exodus 21:5-6.

The Greek word (*apostolos*) translated “apostle” v.1 generally meant someone who was sent (a messenger or envoy). However, the Bible uses it to more specifically refer to the men Jesus chose Luke 6:13-16 to accompany and learn from Him. These men (called the “Twelve”, but eventually became thirteen: the original 12 minus Judas, plus Matthias and Saul/Paul) were the divinely appointed founders of the church (the Body of Christ 1 Corinthians 12:27-28).

Each time Paul mentioned the “Holy Scriptures” v.2, 2 Timothy 3:15, “God’s word” Romans 3:2, 9:6 and the “Law and the Prophets” Romans 3:21, Acts 13:15, he was referring to the Old Testament.

The use of the phrase “Son of God” Matthew 3:17, 16:16, 27:54 declared Jesus as being equivalent to God the Father, and His Resurrection was the proof that affirmed that very declaration.

Note the Trinity: “God” (the Father) v.1, the “Son of God” v.3,4 and the Holy “Spirit” v.4.

1:5-6 Through him and for his name's sake, we received grace and apostleship to call people from among all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith. And you also are among those who are called to belong to Jesus Christ. In the Bible, "grace" (*charis*: kindness or favor toward someone) is the unmerited favor God shows sinners. Paul declared that all true believers receive grace, as well as the responsibility to spread the gospel (apostleship). Although the "Twelve" were uniquely designated apostles, all followers of Jesus have a duty to share this role. These gifts of God were done for "his name's sake", because His name is sacred ^{Philippians 2:9-11} and powerful ^{Acts 3:6, 4:8-10, 16:16-18}. When the "good news" is shared and accepted, it leads people to "the obedience that comes from faith" ^{Romans 16:25-27}.

While perfection is not possible for man in his present earthly condition, faith combined with a desire for and a partial fulfillment of obedience (submission) to the lordship of Jesus Christ is natural and essential for a genuine Christian walk ^{Acts 6:7, James 2:14-20}.

Paul cherished the power of God's grace, because he knew he was loved, forgiven and called into God's service in spite of his life of sin ^{1 Timothy 1:12-15}: "*Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners - of whom I am the worst. But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life.*" ^{1 Timothy 1:15b-16}

A general definition of salvation is: *A faith that leads to obedience.*

1:7 To all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ. In his letter to the "saints" "in Rome", Paul emphasized God's love for them. "Grace and peace" was Paul's standard greeting in his epistles (however, it does not appear in Hebrews). Certainly Paul offered these blessings from himself; however, he stressed that the blessings ultimately come from the Godhead. Later, Paul strongly reminded saints: nothing can separate them from God's love ^{Romans 8:38-39}.

1:8-10 First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is being reported all over the world. God, whom I serve with my whole heart in preaching the gospel of his Son, is my witness how constantly I remember you 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. Paul's gratitude for the receiving of his message, an appreciation for the faith of those he was addressing and a reminder of his prayers for his target audience were also common aspects of his greeting (the exception is the Galatians, who had deserted the true gospel ^{Galatians 1:6-12}). God is the best "witness" of a person's actions in life ^{Job 16:19, Jeremiah 42:5, 2 Corinthians 1:23}. Then Paul declared his desire for God's will ^{Acts 18:21} to allow him to visit the saints in Rome.

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The Greek word (*pneuma*) translated "heart" is normally (more precisely) translated "spirit", thus indicating Paul's prayers came from within his spirit and not simply his soul (heart).

Paul's praying "constantly" for the Romans was an example of a principle of prayer taught with passion by Jesus ^{Luke 18:1} and the Biblical authors ^{Acts 1:14, Ephesians 6:18, 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18}.

1:11-13 I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong – that is, that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith. I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, 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. Paul admitted that his visit would not only benefit the believers in Rome (who would receive "some spiritual gift" and 'encouragement'), but that he would also receive great help ("I may be...encouraged"). His statement about wanting to "have a harvest among you" may have been referring to teaching them how to (1) produce fruit as Spirit-led believers ^{Galatians 5:22-23}, (2) rejoice in righteous actions ^{Philippians 4:4-9} and/or (3) reach out and develop new converts in Rome and beyond ^{Isaiah 49:6, Matthew 28:16-20, Acts 1:8}.

The word "gift" is from the Greek word (*charisma*), with the full meaning: "gift of grace". Paul gave a detailed explanation of the "spiritual gifts" in an earlier letter ^{1 Corinthians 12,14}.

Paul's reference to having been "prevented" from going to Rome probably indicated a block from God ^{Acts 16:6-8, Romans 15:17-22}, because of Paul's responsibilities elsewhere ^{Acts 16:9-10}.

Paul was enthusiastically teaching the saints in Rome. Several years later, Paul exhorted his protégé, Timothy, to also: "Preach the Word ... correct, rebuke and encourage..." ^{2 Timothy 4:2}. What's more, Paul's direction to Timothy is also applicable to all Christians ^{Matthew 28:16-20}.

An aspect of Paul's desire to teach Gentiles may have related to his Jewishness ^{Romans 11:25}.

1:14-15 I am obligated both to Greeks and non-Greeks, both to the wise and the foolish. That is why I am so eager to preach the gospel also to you who are in Rome.

The obligation Paul referred to was to God/Jesus to fulfill His divine mandate to minister to Gentiles ^{Acts 9:15, 13:2, Galatians 1:13-16a, 1 Timothy 1:12}. He targeted people both in and out of the Greek culture and with any level of Earthly wisdom. Paul had a great desire ^{1 Corinthians 9:16} to honor his commitment, and knew if he impacted Rome, his efforts would reach the world.

Both Moses ^{Exodus 3:1-4:17} and Paul ^{Acts 9:1-18} were called into God's service to minister to certain people. However, while Paul accepted his duty with passion and even an 'obligation', Moses was resistant to accept his charge - at first ^{Exodus 3:11, 4:1,10,13} and later ^{Numbers 11:11-15}.