

Introduction

1. Last week we began our study of Romans:
  - a. He's writing to Christians in Rome, mostly Gentiles, whom he's never met
  - b. He described himself as a slave of Jesus Christ and as "called apostle", someone who was set apart to preach the Gospel of God
  - c. He then shared two important truths about the Gospel:
    - 1) The first was that the Gospel wasn't new—it was preached by the prophets of the OT
    - 2) The second is that the Gospel is all about Jesus Christ
2. Today, he continues his introduction:
  - a. His thanks and prayers for the Christians in Rome
  - b. His desire to visit them
  - c. His confidence in the Gospel

A. Paul's thanksgiving and prayers for the Romans (1:8-10)

1. He was thankful for their faith in Christ (8-9): **"First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all because your faith is being proclaimed throughout the whole world."**
  - a. Paul doesn't mention a second point, so **"first"** here is best understood as something akin to **"of first importance, I must tell you"** or **"I want to start by telling you..."**
  - b. Paul's thankfulness was driven in part by the fact that the Romans' faith **"is being proclaimed throughout the whole world"**:
    - 1) Whole world is likely a bit of hyperbole and a reference to the Roman empire
    - 2) His use of the present tense (e.g. continuous action) may imply that their faith might have been reported to Paul on multiple occasions as he visited the churches on his missionary journey
    - 3) One of the reasons for this may have simply been that they were Gentiles who had believed in Christ
      - a) The earliest converts were Jews
      - b) It wasn't until Acts 10 that we get the reports of the first Gentiles believing in Christ under Peter's ministry at Caesarea
      - c) Initially, this led to some tension between Jewish believers and Gentiles, because the Jews were unwilling to accept the new Gentile converts without them subjecting themselves to the OT laws like circumcision, etc. In their eyes, this made them unclean (Acts 11)
      - d) God cleared up the issue in a dream to Peter where He told Peter not to considering unclean anything He had made clean (e.g. the Gentiles)
      - e) The matter was then taken up by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem where they agreed that Gentiles should be accepted as fellow-Christians and not burdened by the strict adherence to the OT Law
2. Paul also prayed for them on a regular basis (9-10): **"For 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..."**

- a. His prayers were **“unceasing”**
- b. They included asking the Lord for an opportunity to visit his readers in Rome (10): **“always in my prayers making request, if perhaps now at last by the will of God I may succeed in coming to you.”**
  - 1) This verse reveals the intensity of Paul’s desire to visit them:
    - a) **“Always in my prayer making request”**
    - b) **“now at last”**
    - c) **“[that] I may succeed in coming to you”**
  - 2) Later (in verse 13) we learn that he had planned to visit them many times, only to be prevented from doing so

B. Paul expresses his desire to visit to his readers in Rome (1:11-15)
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- 1. He wanted to strengthen them in the faith (11): **“For I long to see you so that I may impart some spiritual gift to you, that you may be established;”**
  - a. The word Paul uses here for “long” indicates a deep longing based on the belief or implication that something is lacking (see its use in 2 Corinthians 5:2)
  - b. That seem fitting here as Paul’s longing to see them was based on his desire to strengthen them in the faith:
    - 1) His desire was to give them : **“impart some spiritual gift to you”**
      - a) Most English translations render this the same way as the NASB
      - b) The word translated “impart” here simply means to share something you have with another
      - c) The spiritual gift that Paul intended to give them was not a supernatural gift like those in 1 Corinthians 12, but rather the gift of spiritual maturity as indicated by the next phrase
    - 2) So that they would be **“established”**—to cause them to become stronger or more secure in the faith
- 2. He wanted to mutually encourage one another (12): **“that is, that I may be encouraged together with you while among you, each of us by the other's faith, both yours and mine.”**
- 3. He wanted to reap a harvest among them (13): **“I 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.”**
  - a. When a farmer plants a field, he does so in expectation and anticipation of the coming harvest
  - b. Paul saw his life and ministry in the same way (Philippians 1:21-25): **“For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. 22 But if I am to live on in the flesh, this will mean fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which to choose. 23 But I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better; 24 yet to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sake. 25 Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy in the faith,”**

4. Lastly, he believed he was obligated to them (14-15): **"I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. 15 So, for my part, I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome."**
  - a. Literally Paul wrote, **"To the Greek and Barbarian, to wise and to foolish, I am a debtor."**
  - b. Generally, when you think of being in debt to someone, it's because of something they did for you
  - c. In this case, however, Paul was in obligated/indebted to his readers not because of something they had done, but rather because Jesus Christ commissioned him to serve the Gentiles in the cause of the Gospel

C. Paul asserts his confidence in the Gospel (16-17)
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1. Paul continues by asserting his confidence in the Gospel (16a): **"For I am not ashamed of the gospel..."**
2. The next verse reveals why Paul was so confident in the Gospel (16): **"for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek."**
  - a. What does it mean for the Gospel to be **"the power of God for salvation"**?
    - 1) The phrase **"power of God"** is used 14 times in the Bible, 13 of them are in the New Testament (Job 27:11 is the OT reference)
    - 2) In some instances, Jesus is referred to as the power of God (Acts 8:10; 1 Corinthians 1:24)
    - 3) However, more often than not this phrase "power of God" is linked to salvation and resurrection:
      - a) When the Sadducees, who denied the resurrection of the dead, tried to debate Jesus on the issue, he responded by saying, **"But Jesus answered and said to them, 'You are mistaken, not understanding the Scriptures nor the power of God.'"** (Matthew 22:29)
      - b) In 2 Corinthians 13:4 Paul wrote, **"For indeed He was crucified because of weakness, yet He lives because of the power of God. For we also are weak in Him, yet we will live with Him because of the power of God directed toward you."**
      - c) In 1 Peter 1:5 Peter writes that we are **"protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."**
    - 4) What these verses reveal to us is that God's power to save, raise and protect is manifest in Jesus Christ and the Gospel
  - b. However, there is a caveat: this power is only realized by those who believe the Gospel:
    - 1) Paul writes that the Gospel is God's power for **"everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek"**:
    - 2) Though Paul doesn't state the object of belief here, the Gospel is obviously implied:
      - a) Mark 1:14-15: **"Now after John had been taken into custody, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, 15 and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.'"**
      - b) Acts 15:7: **"After there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, 'Brethren, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles would hear the word of the gospel and believe.'"**

- c) Ephesians 1:13: **"In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation-- having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise,"**

- 3) What does this say about those who do not believe the Gospel? Can they be saved?

Conversation with Dustin about Dallas Willard—he was a universalist who claimed that salvation only came through Jesus but you don't specifically need to know Jesus to be saved. In other words, even those who don't know Jesus can be saved by Jesus

- a) But the Bible says **"And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved."** (Acts 4:12)
- b) READ Romans 10:12-15
3. The last verse in today's passage explains why the Gospel is God's power for salvation (17): **"For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "BUT THE RIGHTEOUS man SHALL LIVE BY FAITH."**
- a. Paul wrote that Gospel **"reveals"** (makes known, manifests) the "righteousness of God"
- b. There are primarily three ways to interpret the phrase **"righteousness of God"** here and scholars love to debate and argue which is the correct interpretation:
- 1) It could refer to an attribute of God, e.g. His righteous nature (genitive of possession)
  - 2) It could refer to God's actions, e.g. God making others righteous (subjective genitive)
  - 3) It could refer to a righteousness that comes from God (a genitive of source)
- c. The bottom line is that good arguments can be made for each of the above interpretations.
- d. However, it's my opinion that we don't have to settle exclusively on any one of these solutions because all are in fact true of the Gospel:
- 1) The Gospel does reveal the righteous nature of God
  - 2) The Gospel does reveal God's righteous actions in saving sinners
  - 3) The Gospel does reveal how we can receive a righteousness from God
- e. The Gospel does this purely on the basis of faith: **"from faith to faith; as it is written, "BUT THE RIGHTEOUS man SHALL LIVE BY FAITH."**
- 1) The phrase **"from faith to faith"** is unusual and difficult, with scholars providing many different interpretations
  - 2) My personal take on the phrase is pretty simple: the Gospel reveals the righteousness of God **from** initial faith **to** a life of faith, which is why he follows up with the quote from Habakkuk 2:4 regarding the righteous man living by faith

Conclusion