

Romans

By Ernst H. Wendland

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Introduction

Written by Paul, (1:1) apparently during his winter stay (55-56) at Corinth. (15:25-27, cp. Acts 19:21; 20:3; I Cor 16:1-4; II Cor Ch 8,9) Erastus (16:23 cp. II Tim 4:20) and Phoebe (16:1) also seem to indicate Corinth. Also Gaius (16:23, cp. I Cor 1:14) although Gaius was a common name.

For some time Paul had wanted to go to Rome. (1:10,11; 15:23) It is significant that he is writing to a congregation he had never visited, to people most of whom had never heard him speak. Hence the three-fold purpose:

- A. To write the basic message that he would have preached in person had he founded the congregation himself.
- B. To deal with immediate problems at Rome. (The letter seems to indicate that there were problems of disunity.)
- C. To lay ground work for a visit to Rome and travels beyond Rome. (15:23)

The congregation at Rome was probably 5 – 10 years old. Probably no individual founder. (15:20) Critics center their attacks on Ch. 16 claiming that it does not belong to the letter. (We can take up the arguments when we study the chapter.)

Consider the letter as a missionary document:

- A. Proclamation of the Gospel message most important. (How much is said about social work?)
- B. Thorough indoctrination. (How well can the members of a ten year old congregation in Japan understand this letter at first reading? Have they received as much instruction as is contained in this letter?)
- C. Confessional (16:17)

I. Paul's Introduction 1:1-17

A. Paul introduces himself as a man commissioned by God to proclaim the universal Gospel of Jesus Christ. 1:1-6.

Note the first descriptive word is δούλος – slave. Owned by Jesus Christ. No will of his own. Purchased to serve and to serve a purpose. The master, however, is Jesus Christ the Savior Who died for Paul and all men. His yoke is light, but He still is absolute master. Paul became Jesus' δούλος the moment he said κύριε on the road to Damascus. "What will you have me to do?" Can you and I honestly call ourselves slaves of Jesus Christ? It is then that a person becomes truly happy.

κλητός Paul did not choose this life for himself. Had been doing the opposite on the road to Damascus.

ἀπόστολος - sent out. Note Jesus' final instructions in Mt. 28, Acts 1, Mk. 16, also the history of the church in Acts. The Apostles were to go out, go everywhere, and to proclaim the Good News wherever they went. This the function of an apostle.

ἄφωρισμένος Not everyone is called to do this on the same scale. Unbelievers can not at all. Paul was separated from unbelievers, also from other believers and made one of the apostles.

This Gospel is the whole purpose for which Paul and the other apostles are called and separated. It is God's Gospel. This is what He wants done with it. These are the men whom He has chosen to proclaim it. It is all His doing. We pastors have a call – a different call, but it is from the same God to proclaim the same Gospel. Think about it. What does it make you to be? What is your function, your purpose for being?

V.2 προεπηγγείλατο Aor. sin. ind. mid. Promise before hand. Note how the Greek can pile up the prefixes until you get the exact thrust and direction that you want. God chose Greek for His N.T. (Alexander the Great) The Good News was announced, proclaimed beforehand – before Paul and the Roman's time, before it all happened, before Bethlehem and Calvary.

The prophets are His prophets, parallel to the apostles. They served Him, proclaimed His Gospel. Just as the Gospel is His Gospel, so the men who proclaim it are His men. (Does Paul always see the Gospel as a proclaimed message – never static? Possibly, but be careful not to deny the fact that the Word of God is objective truth.) These writings are ἄγίαις, different, separate, God's Own in a special way. Note His men, His Gospel, His writings. There is no doubt or question as to whether Paul is talking about works of men or works of God.

V.3 περὶ This Gospel is about or concerning His, God's Son. It is a Father's message about His beloved Son. All the love of a father, the Father to His Son is involved. The message is permeated not only with God's love for man, but also with the Father's love for His Son.

This Son was born a real man. He was a descendant of David. Can we grasp the honor given this dynasty? God Himself became a descendant of David. Note how this throws back to the Old Testament Scriptures and prophets mentioned earlier. To those readers who know the O.T. just the mention of David brings a wealth of connotations. Such words are treasure chests of material for sermons.

V.4 Note the κατὰ σάρκα – κατὰ πνεῦμα balance?

ὀρίξω – usual meaning seems to be to set limits, define. Here possibly declare in particular Who, rather What He is. This declaration of His Sonship was made with power, not just words – the awesome power displayed by His resurrection from the dead.

κατὰ πνεῦμα ἁγιωσύνης is I Tim. 3:16 ἐδικαίωθη ἐν πνεύματι a similar thought? Possibly Holy Spirit – Jesus' spirit of holiness may also be a possibility. I prefer the former. However the later would have the two κατὰ balance. (This matter of the Holy Spirit being involved in the declaration of Jesus' righteousness and sonship needs to be explored. cp. John 16:8-11?)

Now Paul names Him. Note the line-up: first the personal name of this Jew from Nazareth, then the Savior promised in the O.T., and finally our Lord, Paul's Lord, the Roman's Lord. First Who He is, then what He is, and finally what He is to Paul and the Romans.

V.5 χάριν Grace had to come first. Became acceptable to God, a slave of Jesus by grace. V.7 wishes same for them. This grace came through Jesus, Who redeems Paul and the others, Who also met Paul on the way to Damascus, Who then also continued to be with Paul and supply daily grace, strength, wisdom, etc.

ἀποστολήν the plural verb must, can only refer to Paul and the other apostles. εἰς seems to express purpose. Paul is an example of this obedience of faith. Purchased by Christ, chosen by grace, captivated by Jesus' love for him, Paul has become a δοῦλος of Christ. This is what Paul and the Apostles have been called to work or bring about among the Gentiles.

ὕπὲρ possibly “For the sake of.” This would have the thought end with all this working finally being for Christ’s glory. Possible key lies in “Name.” This working obedience of faith among the Gentiles demonstrates what Christ actually is – the Savior of mankind.

V.6 “Romans” see how you fit into the over-all picture? See how I think of you as I write to you? You are people who in accordance with the above have been called to belong to Christ.” It was an effective call. They now belong to Christ.

B. The Greeting v. 7

Extended to all who have these spiritual characteristics. All to whom God has done this, make to be this, called by God, holy. This is the tremendous thing that has happened to them. This address cuts through any partisanship, based upon race, station, or other superficial things. We feel this fellowship, involving various races in our church in Japan. As a foreigner I feel closer to Japanese Christians than I do to unbelieving Americans.

Define *χάρις* grace.

C. Paul’s Prayers Regarding the Romans 1:8-12

He begins with thanks. We need to stop and consider what God has done, rather than think only of what He has not done or what evils and problems we have in the church. There will always be actual, factual reason for thanks, probably more reason than we thought. His word does not return void.

Paul also prays, makes requests for them. We as pastors are to not only preach to our people, but also pray for our people.

There is a strong personal feeling, desire to come to Rome. He will have to make this letter do for the time being. By letter he is trying to say the things he would rather say in person. Those of us who are separated from loved-ones know the feeling well. He is writing to people whom he would much rather visit. This gives the letter a strong personal appeal. God uses all these human circumstances as ingredients for His inspired word. We can be thankful that Paul felt this way, but didn’t get to Rome right away. The result is this letter for the edification of God’s saints to the end of time.

His feelings about them are very human, but centered in the spiritual. Becoming mature does not mean a casting off of human, emotional relationships – rather a deepening of these relationships involving the spiritual realm and spiritual, eternal values.

Vocables: ἀδιαλείπτως – unceasing

δέομαι – request

εἴπως – if somehow

εὐδόμαι – be happy, succeed

ἐπιποφῆω – long, strain

στερῖξω – to fix firmly

D. Paul wants to Proclaim the Gospel at Rome 1:13-17

V.13 He wants to bestow a spiritual gift, to strengthen them. This he is trying to do through this letter. He looks for mutual encouragement. This they can experience only if he visits them personally.

ἔθνεσιν Gentiles. He speaks of the Roman churches as Gentile churches (2:17). Is it nevertheless possible that there was disunity caused by the fact that you did have a Jewish element and Gentile element in the churches?

V.14 What would Paul do in Rome? – preach the Gospel. What is he going to do in this letter? – preach the same Gospel.

V.15 These are not just polite expressions. Paul really wants to go to Rome. He feels it is part of his calling. He expects God to accomplish things in Rome through him. He has wanted to go but has been prevented from doing so.

V.16,17 *sedes*. Choosing an O.T. text is significant. It should be authoritative for the Jews, also show the Gentiles that Paul's N.T. message is the same message as that proclaimed by the O.T. (Habakuk 2:4 Read the entire book to get the setting and significance of the passage.)

Why mention shame? cp. Luke 9:26; I Cor. 1:23. A lot of missionary experience lies behind this statement: Mars Hill (Acts 17:32), "Fought with beasts at Ephesus" (I Cor 15:32), "I bear in my body the marks" (Gal 6:17). There must have been many times when it was hard not to be ashamed of this Gospel. *εὐαγγέλιον* Gospel.

δύναμις Power. Don't forget it. It is this. Why resort to fire crackers when you have an H-bomb in your arsenal?

God's power – there is no greater power than God's will. But this is not only a destructive power or creating power. It is also a saving power. Think of it. As Gospel-preaching pastors we have the power to give men eternal life!

If there were any problems at Rome, possibly problems of disunity, note the cure that Paul applies. He goes back to the basic facts of salvation by faith alone. A clear understanding of our salvation by faith alone will cause any problem to disappear.

δικαιοσύνη cf. Luther on subjective and objective genitive. "*Die Gerechtigkeit, die vor Gott gilt.*" Note the link up of righteousness and salvation. When man lost righteousness, *δικαιοσύνη*, he lost life, lost life with God, became subject to sin. The restoration of righteousness is salvation. Restoration of righteousness frees from death and gives eternal life with God. In Scriptures sin and death, and on the other hand, righteousness and life are inseparable. The term *δικαιοσύνη* is a forensic term. (More on that later.)

Paul immediately brings in faith to make clear as to how this righteousness is obtained. It is not righteousness that is achieved, rather bestowed upon those who believe.

"The just shall live by faith." Hab 2:4. How did Habakuk mean it? In Habakuk's day the actual conditions about him seemed contradictory to God's justice and power. How does the LXX translate it? How does Paul use this quotation? The context, especially *δικαιοσύνη* explains it. Faith makes me right with God. I believe that He has justified me and shall make all things right in the end. I can't see it now, just as Habakuk couldn't see it, but I believe it, and by this faith I live and have life eternal.

Cf. Hebrews 10:38. He tells them to hold on by faith, faith in the midst of suffering, faith that holds on to the end. This faith gives eternal life This faith is the source and provides the direction of the believer's life now. Gal. 3:11 is clearly justification by faith, receiving righteousness. What does this verse tell us about O.T. interpretation? cf. Luther's "*Turmerlebnis.*"