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### Recommended Citation

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studies in

# ROMANS

book II

Romans 1:1-17

by Dr. Lehman Strauss

**Studies in Romans**  
**Book II**  
by Dr. Lehman Strauss  
Romans 1:1-17

Published in 1980 by Biola College, Inc.  
as a ministry of the Biola Hour, 13800 Biola Avenue,  
La Mirada, California 90639.

1. PAUL, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God
  2. (Which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures),
  3. Concerning his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who was made of the seed of David according to the flesh,
  4. And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead;
  5. By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name;
  6. Among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ;
  7. To all that be in Rome, beloved to God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.
  8. First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.
  9. For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers,
  10. Making request, if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you.
  11. For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established;
  12. That is, that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me.
  13. Now I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that oftentimes I purposed to come unto you (but was let hitherto,) that I might have some fruit among you also, even as among other Gentiles.
  14. I am debtor both to the Greeks and to the barbarians; both to the wise and to the unwise.
  15. So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also.
  16. For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.
  17. For in it is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, The just shall live by faith.
- (Romans 1:1-17)

## PART ONE

### INTRODUCTION (ROMANS 1:1-17)

#### OUTLINE

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#### I. PAUL AND HIS STATUS (1:1)

##### A. Paul the Servant

In the opening verse of the Epistle, Paul calls himself “a servant of Jesus Christ”. The word *servant* (Gr. *doulos*) means *bondslave*. The day Paul became a Christian, he asked, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” (Acts 9:6). The word *Lord* (Gr. *kurios*) means *master*, the opposite of the word *servant*. As a sinner redeemed by the blood of Christ, Paul considered himself under total obligation to his Re-



deemer and Master. Paul was an excellent example of a truly saved person. When he calls himself a slave of Jesus Christ it is possible he had in mind the Hebrew servant who, because of a deep love for his master, said, "I love my master . . . I will not go out free" (Exodus 21:5). Paul recognized Christ's Lordship at the time of his conversion, and from that day he counted it the highest honor to be Christ's bondsman. This is the first lesson every Christian must learn. Jesus has purchased us out of the slave market of sin, and now all that we are and have belongs to Him.

#### B. Paul the Sent One

Paul was "*called an Apostle*". I have purposely removed the words "to be". You will notice they are in italics, which means they were supplied by the translators. The word apostle (Gr. *apostolos*) means *one who is sent forth, a missionary*. A necessary qualification for a man to be an apostle was that his call must come directly from the Lord. Paul was "a called apostle", that is, divinely called. He was no self-styled or self-appointed apostle. Paul knew the difference because he wrote about the "false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ" (2 Corinthians 11:13). Paul was not one of the "twelve", but he fulfilled the qualification for a man to be an apostle, namely, he must have seen the Lord. Paul identified his apostleship with having seen Jesus Christ (I Corinthians 9:1; 15:8,9).

#### C. Paul the Specialist

He was "*separated unto the gospel of God*". Paul's status was clear to him. He was the Lord's *servant*, the Lord's *sent one* and the Lord's *separated one*. The word *separate* (Gr. *aphorizo*) means *to mark off by boundaries, to limit*. Here it is that act of God in setting apart a person for a particular task. Paul was set apart for a special work (Ephesians 3:1-11). He was conscious of a triple setting apart by God:

1. He was separated by the Father before his conversion (Galatians 1:15).
2. He was separated by Christ at his conversion (Acts 9:15).
3. He was separated by the Holy Spirit after his conversion (Acts 13:2).

For every Christian God has a plan. Are you fulfilling that plan? Paul did. He said, "This one thing I do" (Philippians 3:13). He was God's specialist.

## II. PAUL AND HIS SAVIOUR (1:2-6)

Jesus Christ is at the very heart of the Christian Gospel. What a person thinks of Him is of the utmost importance because He is Christianity personified. Christianity is Christ. This does not mean that the Gospel of God was some new idea when Christ was born. Some critics of Christianity argue that it is a recent religion when compared with ancient oriental religions. But they are wrong. Christianity predates Buddha, Confucius, Zoroaster and the first pope. We will allow Paul to tell us about Jesus Christ.

#### A. Christ is the Historical One (1:2)

Frequently in Romans Paul appeals to the Old Testament Scriptures that they are a revelation from God concerning Jesus Christ and the Gospel. Here in verse 2 it is stated that the Gospel of God which concerns Jesus Christ was "*promised afore by His prophets in the Holy Scriptures*". The gospel is not something new; it is no novelty. Dr. McClain counted sixty-one quotations in Romans from the Old Testament, five in Genesis, four in Exodus, two in Leviticus, five in Deuteronomy, two in I Kings, fifteen in the Psalms, two in Proverbs, nineteen in Isaiah, one in Ezekiel, two in Hosea, one in Nahum, one in Habakkuk, one in Malachi. Peter testified, "To Him give all the prophets witness, that through His name whosoever believed in Him shall receive remission of sins" (Acts 10:43). The written Word of the Old Testament reveals the living Word, and the living Word is the key to the written Word. What Romans teaches about Jesus Christ is consistent with the truth God revealed in the Old Testament.

#### B. Christ is the Human One (1:3)

The text says that Christ "*was made of the seed of David according to the flesh*" (1:3). The New Testament commences and concludes with a reference to Jesus as the son of David (Matthew 1:1; Revelation 22:16). Conservative scholarship is in agreement that the words "was made"



read "was born", denoting a human Jesus. Here is a clear statement of the Incarnation, how God the eternal Son, existing in spirit form, became a man (see John 1:1,14; I Timothy 3:16). Our Lord's humanity, his "flesh", came from the seed of David (II Timothy 2:8). In II Samuel 7:12-17, the promise of the Royal Seed was given. Christ's coming into the world identified Him with the Royal Family. The angel said to the virgin Mary, "The Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David" (Luke 1:32). The Gospel in Romans is the Gospel of the *Incarnation*.

### C. Christ is the Holy One (1:4-6)

Since Christianity is a Person, and this Person is Jesus Christ, then we must know all about Him. Paul said He is "*declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead*" (1:4). Observe the contrast between two verbs used in verses 3 and 4. In verse 3, Christ was *made* (or *born*) of the seed of David; in verse 4, He is *declared* to be the Son of God. His human body was born at an appointed time in history (Galatians 4:4), but as the Holy One He existed from eternity. The word *declared* (Gr. *horizo*) means *to mark out, determine*. Christ was marked out, distinguished from every other human being as the Son of God. First, His perfect holiness distinguishes Him from all others. Second, His bodily resurrection from death and the grave distinguishes Him from all others. The resurrection here is not limited to Christ's own resurrection, but it guarantees the resurrection of all men. Paul knew that Christ was alive because he first met Him as the risen and ascended Lord (Acts 9:1-6). The Gospel in Romans is the Gospel of the *Resurrection*.

"*By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations*" (1:5). Wuest believes that the "we" refers only to Paul. It was from the risen Christ that He received the office of an apostle. Barnhouse says the "we" refers to that which immediately follows, namely, "to all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints". This, in my judgment, is not a point to be debated. The main thought here is that only the risen and ascended Christ can administer the office of the apostleship. And every gift He bestows upon men is a favor (grace) toward the recipient. You have it stated clearly in Ephesians, "He that

descended is the same also that ascended . . . And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers" (Ephesians 4:10,11). In Romans the purpose behind the bestowal of Paul's apostleship was to promote "*obedience to the faith among all nations*" (1:5). By God's grace Paul was made an apostle so that he might be used to bring about an obedience to the Christian Faith among Gentiles.

## III PAUL AND THE SAINTS (1:7-13)

The Roman Epistle was written to Christians who were young in the Faith, "newborn babes" (I Peter 2:2). They needed to be taught and strengthened by the Word of God, so the apostle shifts his attention directly to them.

### A. His Description of Them (1:7)

#### 1. Their Location

This particular group of believers was in Rome, "*to all that be in Rome*" (1:7). How did the church get started in Rome? We know that Peter had nothing to do with it since there is no evidence that he ever visited Rome. It is possible that some who traveled from Rome to Jerusalem at Pentecost were among the thousands who were saved when Peter preached. Included in that group would be both Jews and Gentiles. We know this because Paul speaks to both in this Epistle (Acts 2:10). Neither Peter nor any other apostle founded the church in Rome. Had Peter founded the church at Rome, Paul would not have planned to go there, because his policy was to minister in those places where other apostles had not been (Romans 15:20).

#### 2. Their Relation

Paul addresses them as the "*beloved of God*" (1:7). This is a term used only of believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. It expresses that unique relation between God and His born again ones. All persons are loved by God (John 3:16), but only His children are His "beloved" ones. The first mention of this term in the New Testament is when God the Father said of Jesus Christ, "This is my beloved Son" (Matthew 3:17; 17:5). Its first use in the Epistles is here in Romans 1:7



where it is applied to believers. Christ is the *beloved* of the Father, and when the sinner receives Christ he is "accepted in the Beloved" (Ephesians 1:6).

### 3. Their Sanctification

The *beloved* ones are "*called saints*". This is now the third time Paul used the word "called" (1:1,6,7). I have purposely omitted the words "to be" because, as in verse 1, they are in italics, meaning they were added by the translators. They were not *to be* saints at some future time; they already were saints. Their sainthood was a part of their calling. The word "saint" (Gr. *hagios*) is the noun form of the verb "sanctify" (Gr. *hagiazō*). To *sanctify* means *to set apart*, thus a *saint* is a set-apart one. No person can attain to sainthood. It is the work of God whereby He sets apart the believing sinner. The word "saint" is a frequently used and accurate designation of every believer. Every saved sinner is a saint through the effectual call of God.

### B. His Delight in Them (1:8)

"*First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world*" (1:8). Paul's first word to them is one of commendation, not condemnation. This is a typical Pauline approach. In every one of his Epistles (Galatians excepted) the salutation is followed by an expression of gratitude. The reason for the exception in Galatians is because those churches in the Province of Galatia had defected from the principle of grace to the law principle. But in Rome the saints remained faithful. Their's was a working faith (James 2:17, 20, 26). The "*whole world*" in Romans 1:7 means the then known world of the Roman Empire. Paul's prayer of thanksgiving was not for something God had done for him personally, but for other believers whom God was using to spread His Gospel.

### C. His Devotion Toward Them (1:9,10)

Paul had a large prayer list (Ephesians 1:16; 3:14; Philipians 1:8,9,; Colossians 1:9; I Thessalonians 1:2). He prayed for Christians whom he never met face to face. We may learn from this verse one of the necessary requisites for a successful prayer life. This kind of praying registers the spirituality of any child of God and the temperature of

warmth one has for fellow-believers, even for those he has never seen. This was no pious phrase coming from Paul, but an evidence of his own deep devotion toward the saints. He prayed "*without ceasing . . . always*" (1:9), suggesting that one can pray at all times, day and night, in sickness or in health, when traveling or remaining quietly in one place. And he counted the time spent in prayer to be a service. He said, "*This is one way in which I serve*".

### D. His Desire for Them (1:10-13)

His first desire was to *meet* them; "*making request, if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you. For I long to see you . . .*" (1:10,11). Paul is not playing with words; he is not uttering empty and meaningless expressions. The love that Paul had for the saints in Rome was the true love of God being shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Spirit (Romans 5:5). It was the first named "*fruit of the Spirit*" (Galatians 5:22).

His second desire was to *minister* to them. He wrote "*That I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established*" (1:11). He has their interest at heart. If in the will of God he would ever reach Rome, his coming would not be with the view to getting something from them, but rather to make a contribution to them. The main ingredient in love is selflessness. Behind Paul's deep desire to see the saints in Rome was the longing to minister to them for their good. He wanted to see them "*established*" (1:11). All of us as Christians are prone to wander. The down-dragging force of the Adamic nature in us, and the pull of the world-system all about us demands that we be "*established*" (Gr. *sterizo*), meaning *strengthened, confirmed, rooted and grounded* in the faith (Ephesians 3:17; Colossians 2:7). May God give to our generation more pastors and missionaries like Paul.

## IV. PAUL AND HIS SUBJECT (1:14-17)

It is interesting to observe how the human penmen of the Bible were guided by the Holy Spirit to write along different lines of truth. To one was entrusted the message of prophecy, to another history, to others the great doctrines of the



Bible. The subject entrusted to Paul was "The Gospel". He used the word *gospel* not less than thirteen times in Romans and seventy-three times in all of his writings. Exactly what is the Christian Gospel, and what did it mean to Paul?

#### A. A Supernatural Revelation

The Gospel Paul preached was not a man-made theory nor a mere human philosophy. It was a truth supernaturally revealed to Paul from the Lord Himself. He wrote to the Galatians, "But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after men. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ" (Galatians 1:11,12).

The word "gospel" (Gr. *euangelion*) means "good news," the good news of God, and as 1:3 says, it is "concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord". The gospel then is about the Lord Jesus Christ in His majestic person and mighty work. It is defined as follows: "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel . . . how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the scriptures" (I Corinthians 1:3,4). On this biblical definition we must be clear. A gospel that does not contain the three historical facts of Christ's substitutionary death for sinners, His burial, and bodily resurrection from death and the grave is a spurious gospel. Paul calls it "*another*" (Gr. *heteros*) gospel, meaning another of a different sort or kind.

#### B. A Solemn Responsibility (1:14)

Once the gospel had been committed to Paul it enjoined upon him a solemn responsibility. He considered himself a debtor. He wrote, "*I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise*" (1:14). This is Paul's concept of the Christian life. The Christian is to take the gospel to all men, to the Greeks (the civilized and the cultured), and to the Barbarians (the uncivilized and uncultured). In Christ such distinctions do not exist (Colossians 3:11). Paul proclaimed the gospel with equal concern and compassion to Onesimus, the runaway slave, and to Agrippa, the haughty king. If every Christian saw his responsibility as did Paul, the world could be evangelized in a comparatively short time.

#### C. A Swift Readiness (1:15)

"*So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also*" (1:15). It is not enough that we have a conviction about our responsibility. We must be able to say at all times, and without advanced warning, "I am ready". Phillips wrote of Paul, "When he preached the gospel at Jerusalem, the religious center of the world, he was mobbed. When he preached it at Athens, the intellectual center of the world, he was mocked. When he preached it at Rome, the legislative center of the world, he was martyred. He was ready for that." The word Paul used for "ready" (Gr. *prothumos*) is expressive of a willingness accompanied with eagerness and alacrity. When Paul heard the Macedonian call, he went "immediately" (Acts 16:9,10). The debt had to be paid.

Many Christians are always planning to get ready, but they never are ready. A swift readiness lies at the heart of all true Christian service. It is better for a Christian that he never hear God's call to service, than to hear and refuse to heed. Are you ready?

#### D. A Saving Remedy (1:16)

"*For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek*" (1:16). Barclay says, "It is an amazing thing to think of the background of that statement. Paul had been imprisoned in Philippi, chased out of Thessalonica, smuggled out of Berea, laughed at in Athens. He had preached in Corinth where his message was foolishness to the Greeks and a stumbling block to the Jews, and out of that background Paul declared that he was proud of the gospel. There was something in the gospel which made Paul triumphantly victorious over all that men could do to him." If Paul could not get to Rome, it was neither fear nor shame that would keep him from going. Men dignify fraternal organizations and secret societies when they display an insignia where all can see it. Inasmuch as the gospel is the only saving remedy for sinners, we should be proud of it. Look at the text again (verse 16). There are at least five reasons why we should be proud of the gospel:

1. Because of its Subject . . . "Christ"
2. Because of its Supremacy . . . "The power of God"



3. Because of its Success . . . "unto salvation"
4. Because of its Scope . . . "to everyone"
5. Because of its Simplicity . . . "that believeth"

#### E. A Sovereign Righteousness (1:17)

Here is the bedrock upon which this Epistle rests, "*the righteousness of God*" (1:17). That God's sovereign righteousness is available to sinners is the burden of the Book of Romans. Verse 16 cannot be disassociated from verse 17. Apart from the gospel there is no manifestation of God's righteousness. No man has the righteousness of God. Man has a righteousness, but it is a soiled and sordid righteousness which he must abandon. The prophet Isaiah describes man's righteousness as "filthy rags" (Isaiah 64:6). God has provided a righteousness which He sovereignly makes available to any person who will receive it by faith. This is all a part of the gospel. "*As it is written, the just shall live by faith*" (1:17). God sees our unrighteousness and our absolute inability to attain to His righteousness. No man would ever reach heaven if getting there depended on his own righteousness, or even attaining to God's righteousness.

Any person who is declared righteous by God has eternal life, and that Divine declaration is the result of God's free gift. It is the person who has faith, who believes God, that receives the blessing. Our text emphasized the fact that faith is the essential ingredient whereby God's righteousness is received by man. "*The just shall live by faith*". How can a righteous God forgive guilty sinners and remain righteous? The answer is in the Gospel. This is the key to the Epistle to the Romans. The remainder of the Epistle goes on to explain it. Because one large section of the Epistle is devoted to the subject, The Righteousness of God (Chapters 3 and 4), we will defer any further study of it until we consider that portion.

Before leaving Paul's introduction and moving on to the first major section of the Epistle, I feel an urgency to make a few comments on the expression in verse 17, "*from faith to faith*". Barnouse believed and taught that it means from the faith of one person to the faith of another, thereby showing a method for spreading the Gospel. Welch leaned to the idea that "from (i.e. *out of*) faith" refers to the faith or faithful-

ness of Christ, and "unto faith" to the faith of the believer. Personally, I am not inclined toward either of those views. While my mind is not closed on the matter, but remains open for further light and adjustment, I will venture to offer some comments.

To begin, I would avoid the idea that receiving the righteousness of God is in any sense a process; that is, a series of steps or developments in faith which lead on to a climax. One does not necessarily receive the truth of the Gospel bit by bit, and believe it bit by bit, and then reach a climax of belief thereby becoming justified.

I see in the statement "from faith to faith" a two-fold aspect of faith. *First*, faith is the appropriating medium by which the sinner receives salvation and is declared righteous by God. That could occur, on the one hand, the first time one hears the Gospel, or it could occur, on the other, after many hearings and explanations of the Gospel. The point is that a person must believe in order to be saved. He must take that initial step of faith.

*Second*, the phrase "*from faith to faith*" embraces the entire course of the Christian way of life. Elsewhere Paul wrote, "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him" (Colossians 2:6). How did we Christians receive Him? By faith, of course. Well then, we are to carry on by faith. "For we walk by faith, not by sight" (II Corinthians 5:7). Abraham is cited in Scripture as a fine example of a believer who lived "from faith to faith". It is stated clearly in Hebrews II. "By faith" he *started* (11:8), "by faith" he *sojourned* (11:9), "by faith" he *sacrificed* (11:17-19). Paul explains in greater detail about Abraham's life in Romans, chapter 4.

This concludes Paul's introduction to the Epistle to the Romans, and it is sufficiently adequate to prepare the student for the mighty doctrinal treatise that follows.



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