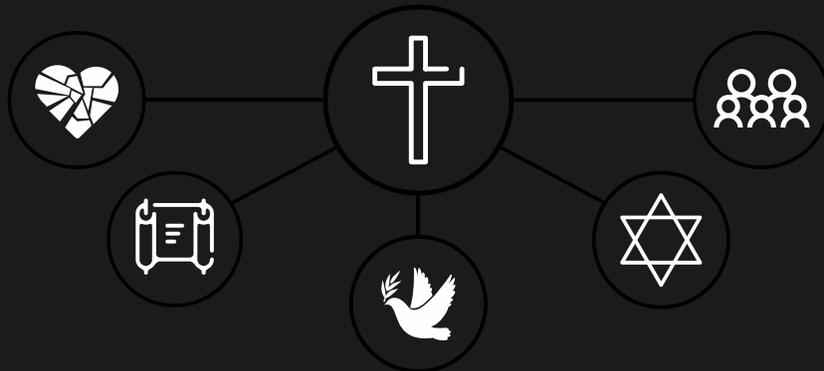




ROMANS AND THE FUTURE GOSPEL

ROMANS 1-7



Title: Romans and the Future Gospel

Text: Romans 1:8-17

Date: September 25, 2022

Main Idea: Paul is eager to visit Rome so he can continue to see fruit in Gospel ministry there.

Personal Study Guide

READ ROMANS 1:8-17

Highlight – What stands out?

We're going to break this down into 3 sections:

- Verses 8-12
- Verses 13-15
- Verses 16-17

For this lesson, it is helpful to read this text in the ESV (or CSB) and the NIV. Let's look at the first section of verses:

Verses 8-12

1. What is spiritual action is Paul talking about here?
2. Why does he do that?
3. What two things does he want to see happen in the life of the Roman church?

Verses 13-15:

1. Paul gives a lot of statements and then backs them up with a reason, or a lot of exhortations backed up with a purpose. In verse 13, he says why he wanted to come to Rome. Why is that?
2. In verse 14-15 he says why. What's his reason?

Verses 16-17:

1. Paul connects a lot of ideas with “for”. This is often his explanation for the idea that precedes the “for” statement. In these two verses, he establishes what some call his “thesis” for the book. What is it?
2. What is familiar to you in these verses? What is unfamiliar?
3. What do you notice about God and his Son, Jesus Christ?

Explain – What does this mean?

Verses 8-12

1. Paul’s eagerness to be with them, and his prayer for them, is not unique to his letter to the Romans. It comes up repeatedly in his letters. Look up the following verses and notice how and why Paul prays for these believers:
 - Ephesians 1:15-19
 - Philippians 1:3-11
 - 1 Thessalonians 1:2-4

- 1 Corinthians 1:1-4

2. What do you know about these other letters Paul wrote? What is the condition of the church in these places? What does that tell you about the nature of Christian unity and Christ's work in his people?

Verses 13-15

1. Based on what we read above, what would fruitful ministry look like for Paul in Rome?

Verses 16-17

1. Connect all of the "for" statement in these two verses and explain how they fit together and how they explain the gospel.
2. Look up the following verses and ask this question: How is the phrase "the righteous one shall live by faith?" explained further by these verses?
 - Habakkuk 2:2-4
 - Hebrews 10:35-39

Summary:

1. Summarize verses 8-15. What is Paul trying to accomplish?
2. Summarize verses 16-17. How does Paul's argument flow from verses 15-17? What purpose does he want to accomplish in these verses?

Apply – How does this change me?

1. In verses 8-12, Paul prays for the Roman believers, Jew and Gentile included. But as we looked at the verses about the other epistles he wrote, we know that not all of the people were easy to pray for. Read Paul's words again in verses 8-12. Is there anyone you struggle with praying for and receiving encouragement from in this way?
2. On the flip side, is there someone that you pray for and are "mutually encouraged by." Why is that the case? What in them causes you to pray this way for them?
3. How does Paul's commitment to and message about the gospel impact your evangelism? Are you ashamed of the gospel? Why or why not?
4. The NIV says this about verse 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.""

Based on this, what is the righteousness of God? How does living "by faith" reveal God's righteousness? How is that different than living by works?

When Paul says “from first to last,” he means from beginning to end. Has God changed in the ways he saves his people? How would that have encouraged the Gentile and Jew Christians towards unity? How does that encourage you towards unity with people you don’t see eye to eye with?

Respond – What’s my next step?

1. Who do you need to pray for and seek mutual encouragement from this week?

2. In what ways do you need to embrace Paul’s message of verses 16-17 this week?

Commentary: Romans 1:8-17 by F.F. Bruce

Note to Group Leaders: There is an extra commentary at the end of this Group Lesson

B. Introduction (1:8–15)

Having thus introduced himself and his theme, Paul explains his present purpose in writing. News that he has received about the high and renowned quality of their faith calls forth deep thanksgiving from Paul, and he assures them of their constant place in his prayers. The churches for which he had primary responsibility—those which he himself had founded—made heavy and continual demands on his time and attention, but he could remember before God other churches too, and not least the church of the capital. He tells them of his long-standing desire and prayer for the opportunity of visiting them; and now, after earlier hindrances, it appeared that his prayer was about to be answered. He hopes not only to impart a blessing to the Roman

Christians, but to receive one for himself through his fellowship with them. And while he has no thought of asserting his apostolic authority in Rome, he looks forward to preaching the gospel there and making some converts in Rome as in the rest of the Gentile world. The preaching of the gospel is in his blood, and he cannot refrain from it; he is never off duty but must constantly be at it, discharging a little more of that obligation which he owes to the whole human family—an obligation which he will never fully discharge so long as he lives.

8. *I thank my God through Jesus Christ.* As it is through Christ that God's grace is conveyed to human beings (verse 5), so it is through Christ that their gratitude is conveyed to God. The mediatorship of Christ is exercised both towards God and towards humanity. (See p. 223, n. 1.)

Your faith is proclaimed in all the world. Cf. 1 Thessalonians 1:8, 'your faith in God has gone forth everywhere.' In both passages Paul thinks more particularly of all the places where Christianity has been established (see also note on 10:18, p. 206).

9. *Whom I serve with my spirit.* NEB, 'to whom I offer the humble service of my spirit'.

Without ceasing I mention you always in my prayers. (Cf. Eph. 1:16; Phil. 1:3–4; Col. 1:3; 1 Thess. 1:2; 2 Thess. 1:3; Philem. 4.) That Paul should pray regularly for his own converts is what one might expect, but it is evident from this passage that his prayers went beyond his immediate circle of personal acquaintance and apostolic responsibility.

10. *At last.* (Cf. 'often', verse 13.) Of these earlier occasions when Paul had hoped or planned to visit Rome we have no direct information.

12. *That we may be mutually encouraged.* This would correct any impression given by verse 11 that he would be the benefactor and they the beneficiaries. He hopes to receive help as well as to give it during his purposed visit to Rome.

13. *I want you to know, brethren.* A favourite Pauline expression, literally 'I do not want you to be ignorant' (cf. 11:25; 1 Cor. 10:1; 12:1; 2 Cor. 1:8; 1 Thess. 4:13).

Thus far have been prevented. One obstacle could have been the imperial edict of AD 49 expelling Jews from Rome (cf. Acts 18:2; see p. 22).

14. *Both to Greeks and to barbarians.* To the Greeks, all non-Greeks were 'barbarians' (*barbaroi*, a word which probably imitated the unintelligible sound of foreign languages). Cf. Acts 28:2; 1 Corinthians 14:11.

15. *In Rome.* See textual note on p. 33.

A. The Gospel According To Paul (1:16–11:36)

1. THE THEME OF THE GOSPEL: THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD REVEALED (1:16–17)

'Believe me,' Paul goes on, 'I have no reason to be ashamed of the gospel I preach. No indeed; it is the powerful means which God employs for the salvation of all who believe—the Jew first, and the Gentile also. And why is this so? Because in this gospel there is a revelation of God's way of righteousness—a way of righteousness based on the principle of faith and presented to men and women for their acceptance by faith. It was of this righteousness that the prophet said, "He who through faith is righteous shall live."'

To understand the sense in which the gospel is said to reveal God's righteousness it is necessary to bear in mind some facts about the concept of righteousness in the Old Testament, which forms the chief background of Paul's thought and language.

The ideas of right and wrong among the Hebrews are forensic ideas; that is, the Hebrew always thinks of the right and the wrong as if they were to be settled before a judge. Righteousness is to the Hebrew not so much a moral quality as a legal status. The word 'righteous' (*ṣaddīq*) means simply 'in the right', and the word 'wicked' (*rašā'*) means 'in the wrong'. 'I have sinned this time', says Pharaoh, 'Jehovah is in the right (A.V. righteous), and I and my people are in the wrong (A.V. wicked)', Exod. 9:27. Jehovah is always in the right, for He is not only sovereign but self-consistent. He is the fountain of righteousness ... the consistent will of Jehovah is the law of Israel.

God is himself righteous, and those men and women are righteous who are 'in the right' in relation to God and his law. When, therefore, the righteousness of God is revealed in the gospel, it is revealed in a twofold manner. The gospel tells us first how men and women, sinners as they are, can come to be 'in the right' with God and second how God's personal righteousness is vindicated in the very act of declaring sinful men and women 'righteous'. This second aspect of the matter is not dealt with immediately, but the former is expanded sufficiently to show that the principle on which God brings people into the right with himself is the principle of faith, and for this statement Old Testament authority is adduced in the words of Habakkuk 2:4b, 'the righteous shall live by his faith'. Habakkuk 2:4b may be called the 'text' of this Epistle; what follows is in large measure an exposition of the prophet's words.

16. *I am not ashamed of the gospel.* This is an instance of the figure of speech called litotes: Paul means that he glories in the gospel and counts it a high honour to proclaim it. Cf. C. K. Barrett, *New Testament Essays* (1972), pp. 116–143.

17. *For in it the righteousness of God is revealed.* A remarkable anticipation of this twofold sense of 'the righteousness of God'—(a) his personal righteousness and (b) the righteousness with which he justifies sinners on the ground of faith—appears in the Qumran literature.

By his righteousness my sin is blotted out ... If I stumble because of fleshly iniquity, my justification is in the righteousness of God which shall stand for ever ... By his mercy he has caused me to approach and by his loving kindness he brings my justification near. By his true righteousness he justifies me and by his abundant goodness he makes atonement for all my iniquities. By his righteousness he cleanses me from the impurity of mortal man and from the sin of the sons of men, that I may praise God for his righteousness and the Most High for his glory.

Through faith for faith. 'It is based on faith and addressed to faith' (NEB mg., which is preferable to NEB text, 'a way that starts from faith and ends in faith'). According to J. Murray, Paul's purpose in the repetition here and in 3:22 ('through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe') is 'to accent the fact that not only does the righteousness of God bear savingly upon us *through faith* but also that it bears savingly upon every one who believes'.

'*He who through faith is righteous shall live.*' These words from Habakkuk 2:4b have already been quoted by Paul in Galatians 3:11 to prove that it is not by the law that people are justified before God. They appear again, together with part of their context, in Hebrews 10:38 to encourage the readers of that Epistle to press on and not lose heart. Hebrew *'ēmûnâ*, translated 'faith' in Habakkuk 2:4 (LXX *pistis*), means 'steadfastness' or 'fidelity'; in the Habakkuk passage this steadfastness or fidelity is based on a firm belief in God and his word, and it is this firm belief that Paul understands by the term.

Habakkuk, crying out to God against the oppression under which his people groaned (late in the seventh century BC), received the divine assurance that wickedness would not triumph indefinitely, that righteousness would ultimately be vindicated, and the earth would 'be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea' (Hab. 2:14). This vision might be slow in being realized, but it would certainly be fulfilled. Meanwhile, the righteous would endure to the end, directing their lives by a loyalty to God inspired by faith in his promise.

In the Qumran commentary on Habakkuk this oracle is applied to 'all the doers of the law in the house of Judah, whom God will save from the place of judgment because of their toil and their fidelity to the Teacher of Righteousness'. In the Talmud (TB *Makkoth* 24a) the same oracle is quoted alongside Amos 5:4, 'Seek me and live', as an example of how the whole law may be summed up in one sentence. 'Perhaps "seek" (in Amos 5:4) means "seek the whole Torah"?' asked Rabbi Nachman ben Isaac. 'No', was the reply of Rabbi Shimplai; 'Habakkuk came after him and reduced it to one sentence, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by his faith".'

When Paul takes up Habakkuk's words and sees in them the foundation truth of the gospel, he gives them the sense, 'it is he who is righteous (justified) through faith that will live.' The terms of Habakkuk's oracle are sufficiently general to make room for Paul's application of them—an application which, far from doing violence to the prophet's intention, expresses the abiding validity of his message.

For Paul, as for many other Jews, 'life' (especially eternal life) and 'salvation' were practically synonymous. If Paul's self-designation as 'a Hebrew born of Hebrews' (Phil. 3:5) means (as is probable) that he was the Aramaic-speaking child of Aramaic-speaking parents, he would very likely, when speaking his native tongue, employ the same word *ḥayyē* for both 'life' and 'salvation'. 'It is he who is righteous (justified) by faith that will live' means, therefore, 'it is he who is righteous (justified) by faith that will be saved'. For Paul, life in the sense of salvation begins with justification but goes beyond it (cf. 5:9–10); it includes sanctification (the subject of Rom. 6–8) and is consummated in final glory (5:2; 8:30). In this comprehensive sense 'salvation' may well be regarded as the key 'to unlock the wards of Paul's theology'.¹

¹ F. F. Bruce, [*Romans: An Introduction and Commentary*](#), vol. 6, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1985), 81–87.