

Introduction:

- After Paul introduces himself in Romans 1, he now turns his attention to the Church of Rome and begins to greet them.
- We know from the first few verse that Paul is very passionate about the Gospel because it appears that he starts down a 'bunny trail' of preaching Christ even before he has introduced himself and the message he carries. This is all good! It give us insight into the personality and drive inside this apostle, the author of this letter.
- The typical letter that Paul writes always start with an introduction and greeting to the people though this one has some different features.

I. First Things First vs 8

- A. I thank God for You! Note Paul's love for the people that God has put upon his heart.
 1. Typical of Paul's letters he gives thanks for the believers. It is a word of affirmation! You are now identified within a select group of people because of your faith in Jesus.
 2. Only in Romans, does Paul offer thanks through Jesus Christ. Nothing wrong with that but it is to be noted. Christ is the one who has made a way for thanks to be given to God.
 3. Note that he gives thanks for all Christians in Rome. All Christ followers are included. Again, I believe that Paul writes this way because of the number of Jewish and Gentile believers. He works to bring them together in his praise of them as one body.
- B. Secondly, your faith in Jesus is talked about all over the world.
 1. Paul references their faith...not that it is great faith but that they have faith. In other words, the Gospel has reached the very heart of Rome! You are the ones who have made that a reality! Keep it up, everyone is talking about you!
 2. "That people in the Roman capital had bowed the knee to the Lord Jesus is something that would be widely known, and perhaps highlighted, by the early missionaries." Moo, D. J. (1996). NICNT Romans (p. 57). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.
- C. I pray for you always when I preach this Gospel
 1. There it is again...Gospel/Good News. In less than 10 verses Paul has already used this term 4 times, in some translations 5 times.
 2. Paul always follows his thanks giving for people with how much he is praying for them. I believe Paul when he writes words like that. It shows his dependence upon the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers as it comes through prayer.
 3. He then, in verse 10 reveals how much he longs to come them as he is always (has been praying for a long time) to come to Rome to preach. It is important that they see his desire to come to them.
 4. "*As God is my witness*" is an expression of Paul's vertical relationship with God that deeply affects his relationship with others and his hoped for relationship with those in Rome.
 5. His goal of his prayer is that he would get to come to Rome to the Roman Christians for the purpose of...

II. Strengthened by Relationship

- A. In verses 11-15 Paul explains why he wants to come to Rome. Note Paul's Passion for the Gospel to be shared.

1. vs 11, I come to share a spiritual gift
 - a) Gr. *metadidomi* - to give or to share, a spiritual gift. This more than likely points to a spiritual truth or understanding that the Roman believers have need of.
 - b) The Holy Spirit is the giver of gifts. We can activate spiritual gifts through ministry and in some cases give them, as Paul did with Timothy. We can give revelation, or spiritual understanding
 - c) What ever it is that Paul longs to give them, it is for the purpose of strengthening them.
 - d) How different would the church look if we all lived with the purpose to giving spiritual stuff away to strengthen people.
 - e) Notice that Paul is not on a 'one way street' vs 12. He wants to encourage them but he also wants to be encouraged by them. IE. Returning guest speakers want to be encouraged by our spiritual growth. They want to build us up and in turn be blessed by the growth we have spiritually and numerically. One way is the offerings that we sow.
 - (1) Different gifts of shared faith means mutual sharing of strengths.
 - (2) If Paul is going to get a sympathetic ear towards 'his' Gospel for Spain he must use tact in exercising his authority.
2. vs 13 to have a harvest
 - a) Gr. *carpos* - fruit, harvest, product.
 - b) Paul is looking for both the increase of Roman believers and also a strengthen of their faith. Both would and do count as fruit that Paul was always looking for.
 - c) vs 14 We see Paul driven by the Holy Spirit on this missional journey. Again, note his passion for the unreached to hear the Gospel.
3. vs 15 to preach the Gospel
 - a) For Paul the Gospel is not just the initial preaching of the Saving work of Christ
 - b) But the ongoing responsibility of the Church to disciple and evangelize.

III. The Theme of the Letter 1:16-17

- A. These two theologically power packed verses have four clauses contained in them, each building upon the former. Many argue a narrow theme out of these two verses: just shall live by faith. Righteousness by faith, Power of God for salvation. To choose one is to miss the letter. We must see a much broader take to Pauls Gospel!
 1. Paul's joy and pride in the message of the Gospel 16a. This is why he is eager to preach. vs 15. Also the language tense that is used in 16a implies a change in focus of this letter.
 - a) From here on we hear no more of Pauls ministry and very little of the Romans.
 - b) The style of writing 1:1-15 and 15:14-ff from Pauls Gospel treatise.
 2. This pride Paul has for the gospel comes from the fact that the gospel contains and delivers God's saving power to all who believe. 16b
 - a) This NT message is grounded in OT word of a God who is personal and comes in power to those who believe.
 - b) It is a gospel that delivers/saves. And we are not just saved from something but saved to... God!!!

- c) "the availability of God's "power for salvation" for "all who believe." This phrase occurs four other times in Romans (3:22; 4:11; 10:4, 11), in each case with particular reference to the breaking down of barriers between Jew and Gentile." NICNT Romans, Moo.
- 3. Why the gospel brings salvation is explained in 17a. It makes visible God's righteousness based on faith.
 - a) The content is Jesus Christ, Son of God in Power sent to save!
 - b) It is to all who believe! Believe is not to a set of doctrines but to the person of Jesus Christ!
- 4. 17b provides scriptural confirmation for this connection between righteousness and faith.
 - a) From start to finish the Word - tells us the depth of this Gospel and just how powerful it is.
 - b) First to the Jew then to the Gentile.
 - c) The righteousness of God
 - (1) Luther's personal spiritual struggle ended with his realization that God's righteousness meant not "the righteousness by which he is righteous in himself but the righteousness by which we are made righteous by God." Moo, D. J. (1996). NICNT Romans (p. 71). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.
 - (2) A new standing imparted to the sinner who believes!
 - (3) The Gospel manifests the saving action of God!!! This would be consistent with OT theme in Psalms and prophets.
 - (4) Paul uses righteousness in Romans several different ways. What we need to know tonight and for the future is this: The common characteristic is righteousness and faith are connected! Every time.
 - (5) Most of the time righteousness is a gift given by God to the one who believes. It therefore becomes a relational status. God brings people into right relationship with Him!
- B. This understanding of righteousness gives the Roman Christian
 - 1. A starting point with Paul's language
 - 2. It brings together both the divine activity of God and the receptivity of the believer.
 - 3. It highlights the end result the process of justification in the believer as righteous.
- C. Paul closes by quoting Hab 2:14 "The just shall live by faith."
 - 1. He speaks in a rhetorical way so as to say, "that faith, and nothing but faith can make us righteous!"
 - 2. Faith is the key to ones relationship with God.
 - 3. "the OT concept, in verses like Gen. 15:6 and Hab. 2:4 especially, shares with NT "faith" the quality of absolute reliance on God and his Word rather than on human abilities, activities, or assurances." Moo, D. J. (1996). NICNT Romans (pp. 78-79). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.