



16 SEPTEMBER 2026
ALL ROADS LEAD TO ROME
Romans 1:1-17

...our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.

2 Peter 3:15-16

In Acts 21:11, Paul was warned that should he continue to go towards Jerusalem, he would be bound hand and foot. Perhaps in this warning, Paul sensed an urgency if he was ever to reach Rome. On this third missionary journey he set forth the doctrines of the faith addressed to those believers he had yet to meet. Consequently, Paul seeks to link himself to his readers in four ways:

HE PRESENTS HIS CREDENTIALS 1:1

He is a servant of Jesus Christ. There were no less than six Greek words denoting servitude, and from these, Paul deliberately chose the strongest one (*doulos*) to describe the most absolute service rendered. The word literally refers to a slave purchased in the market and Paul uses it for several reasons:

The term would be familiar to those living in Rome. Over six million slaves were owned as property throughout the Empire.

Paul was illustrating the fact that Christ had purchased his soul out of the world marketplace. He *belonged* to the Lord.

By identifying himself as a possession of Christ, Paul acknowledged that not only was he obliged to serve the Lord, but that the Lord was responsible for his well-being also.

In listing his servanthood first, Paul is letting the reader know what his priority is in life: to serve Jesus Christ. As a slave, his service would be unconditional...any where, any time, any place.

He is sent as an apostle. The word *apostle* literally means 'one who is sent by authority with a commission.' Paul is indirectly pointing out he has the right to present the gospel, which he will explain in the next few verses. False teachers were everywhere, and many believers were forced into their own understanding concerning church doctrine. Paul settles the matter at the beginning: what he has to say comes from God.

He is separated unto the gospel. This was no small matter. Just as Jeremiah (Jeremiah 1:5) and John the Baptist (Luke 1:15) had been chosen before birth to bring God's message, so too, had Paul been chosen before he was born. There were four 'separations' in Paul's life:

in his mother's womb Galatians 1:15

as a Pharisee set apart unto the Law Philippians 3:5

on the road to Damascus at his conversion Acts 9:15-16

at Antioch he was called to missions Acts 13:1-2

In another sense, the word *separated* comes from the Greek word *aphorizo*, meaning 'to set apart by distinct boundaries.' Again, Paul chose this word specifically to illustrate there was no going back as far as he was concerned. Perhaps there had been believers in Rome who had given up on Christianity and simply returned to their old lives. Paul was setting himself up as the example to follow.

HE PROPOUNDS HIS MESSAGE 1:2-7

propound = to put forth for consideration

NOTE: Paul identifies himself with the gospel of God. *Gospel* means 'good news' and is the message that Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again, and now is able to save all who trust Him (1 Corinthians 15:1-4). But notice the progression in the way Paul presents it:

It is God's gospel (1:1) because it was not invented by man

It is the gospel of Christ (1:16) because it centers in Christ, the Savior

In 1:9 Paul calls it the 'gospel of His Son' indicating Christ is God.

Paul calls it 'my gospel' (16:25-26); he means the special emphasis he gave in his ministry to the doctrine for the Church and the place of the Gentiles in the plan of God

The gospel is not new. Paul said the Old Testament prophets spoke of it. Therefore, in *Romans* he quotes from the OT sixty-one times and alludes to it in types and symbols more than that. This would be of special interest to the Jews because their first thought on any matter is 'How old is it?' 'Can it be found or measured in our scriptures?' One would have to settle this matter before getting anywhere with a Jewish person.

Not only did the Old Testament prophets foretell it, the gospel was promised *afore*; that is, before time itself. The gospel is not an afterthought of God...He did not just throw it together. Genesis 3:15 is the earliest mention of the gospel message in the Bible, but even before then, God had His eye set on saving sinful man (1 Peter 1:19-20).

Note: This totally refutes any claims by cults to have a new and exotic truth concerning the gospel.

The gospel is about Jesus. To us this may sound redundant, but many churches seem uninformed on this point. Much is preached from pulpits today and called the gospel, but it has nothing to do with Christ. Jesus is the Author and Finisher of our faith (Hebrews 12:2)...it begins and ends with Him. Notice how, in using Jesus' full name and title, Paul affirms four important truths:

Son illustrates Christ's unique relationship to the Father

Jesus shows His humanity; it is an earthly name

Christ speaks of His messianic office; He is the Anointed One

Lord identifies His exalted position and person, the Lord Jehovah

Even the order in which Paul uses these titles is important:

He is first the Son of God; He existed from all eternity. In the fullness of time, He came to earth with the announcement...

'His name shall be called Jesus.' (Matthew 1:21) He lived on this earth for thirty years, growing strong in spirit and wisdom (Luke 2:52). Finally came the day when He was baptized and the Spirit of God anointed Him, which is what...

Christ means. First the disciples acknowledged Him as such (John 1:41) and then He offered Himself as the Messiah, only to be rejected by Israel. One day, however, every knee shall bow and acknowledge that Jesus Christ is:

Lord, the name God gave Him and highly exalted above every other name (Philippians 2:8).

The gospel was manifested through the incarnation. In other words, the gospel was made real by Christ's becoming human. He had to be human in order to pay the price for sin. The price required a perfect death and God cannot die. Therefore, in becoming human, Christ was able to pay our sin debt, and show us how to live.

Also, notice the usual expression *born* is not used. This is because Jesus was not born...He always was. The term *made* is used in the New Testament (Galatians 4:4, John 1:14) to illustrate the creative act of God, whereby He somehow took the eternal Spirit of His Son, joined it to the seed of the woman, and brought forth the man, Jesus.

Likewise, our Lord's humanity, or 'flesh,' came from the seed of David. Matthew begins his narrative this way ([Matthew 1:1](#)) and the New Testament closes with this same truth ([Revelation 22:16](#)), declared by Christ Himself. This is done to remind us Jesus is the King, and some day He will come and sit on the throne of his father, David.

The gospel was declared through the resurrection. Whereas Jesus had to be human in order to pay the price for our sin, He also had to be God in order for the payment to be perfect. In [verse four](#), Paul contrasts Christ's humanity with His divinity. The term 'spirit of holiness' is not a reference to the Holy Spirit, although He certainly is a part of it. Rather, it is an expression used to designate the being or essence of God, for God is first of all spirit ([John 4:24](#)).

The verbs Paul utilizes are important as well. As to Jesus' humanity, He was *made* of David's seed. But as to His deity, Christ was *declared*. Human flesh is a created thing: it has a beginning and an ending. The Divine nature, however, exists from eternity and needed only to be declared in order for men to see it.

The word *declared* comes from the Greek word *horizo* (from which we get our English word 'horizon'), and literally means 'to mark out by sure signs.' Thus, God's clear boundary between earth and heaven is Jesus Christ. Likewise, Christ's resurrection from the dead was a necessary sign pointing to His claim to be God:

He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not. He came unto His own, and His own received him not ([John 1:10-11](#)). Later, in [John 2:19](#), the Jews came to Jesus and asked for a sign proving His claim to be their Messiah. Jesus told them: 'Destroy this Temple, and in three days I will raise it up.'

NOTE: some translate the phrase 'from the dead' as 'OF the dead,' indicating a further confirmation of Christ's deity

see [John 5:21](#), [1 Corinthians 15:22](#)

The gospel bestows both salvation and service. Again, the order in which Paul writes these words is important: grace first and then a call to serve. Many attempt to work towards their salvation when in fact, it is a free gift (**Ephesians 2:8-9**). Only after accepting Christ as Savior can one begin to serve Him as such.

Note: Jesus said 'come unto me' before He ordained that we should go into all the world

Interestingly enough, Paul links grace with apostleship. He is simply stating that while grace is ours through salvation, it is also available for use in witnessing and testifying of the 'unsearchable riches of Christ' (**Ephesians 3:8**). Witnessing for Christ is not a difficult or disagreeable duty forced upon us. It is a grace in which we are allowed to participate.

The gospel is received and refreshed by faith. Throughout *Romans*, Paul will emphasize the word *faith* some 35 times. Here, he begins the idea by expressing that the same faith whereby a person is saved keeps them saved throughout their lives (keeping the faith, the just shall live by faith, etc.). Many believers in Rome may have begun to doubt their experience at Pentecost, feeling the fire of the moment fading.

Note: **Romans 1:5** sums up the purpose, scope, and motive of Paul's ministry.

the **purpose** is to promote obedience to the faith

the **scope** is among all the nations

the **motive** is for His name

This statement of motive echoes the original commission of Paul in **Acts 9:15** ...he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel.

(Paul's Audience) 1:6-7

In **verse one**, Paul declared his commission to be an apostle to all nations. Since believers in Rome are included in this task, he easily makes the transition to them: **Among whom are ye also**. He identifies three things in particular about his audience:

They belong to Jesus Christ. The meaning here includes the idea of possession. We might read it like this: *They are called Jesus Christ's.*

They are beloved of God. It stands to reason since Christ is God's beloved Son and believers belong to Christ, then those believers are beloved of God. The saved are 'accepted in the beloved' (**Ephesians 1:6**).

They are branded as saints. The words *to be* are in italics, meaning they were added by the translators. In this case, the statement stands on its own merit: the believers at Rome were identified as saints. Sainthood is not a lofty office to attain but rather, every believer's present reality.

Note: Paul prefaces this epistle with the words *grace and peace*. He does this in every single letter he writes as do both John and Peter.

HE PROVIDES HIS CONCERN **1:8-15**

In **verses 1-7**, Paul went out of his way to establish his apostolic right and relationship to the believers at Rome. For most formal religions this would be enough. But Paul went further to establish a more intimate connection to these followers of Christ.

He was thankful for them 1:8 In every epistle Paul wrote (with the exception of *Galatians*), he always expressed his gratefulness to God for the church's existence. The faith of the believers at Rome had been spoken of throughout the whole world, meaning the entirety of the Roman Empire. This was no small compliment in an age without cell phones and the internet.

Likewise, Paul was thankful for *you all*. Here is a challenge for us today: we most likely have trouble being thankful for ALL our brothers and sisters in Christ (**1 John 3:11,14**). There is not a single saved person for whom God does not have a specific plan. Can we fully appreciate this fact?

Note: In **verse 9**, Paul makes a profound statement that needs to be explained. *For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of His Son...* The word serve literally means 'to serve as a priest.' It is the Greek word used in the Septuagint to refer to the service of priests in the Old Testament Temple. The same word is translated *worship* in **Philippians 3:3**. Thus, this phrase literally becomes a commentary on what true Christian service/worship ought to be.

He prayed for them 1:9-10 Although these believers were unaware of it, Paul was drawing near to God on their behalf. What a tremendous lesson for us to learn. So often, we attempt to change people or situations in our own power, when giving them over to God to do as He sees fit is the absolute best we can accomplish.

What Paul could not know, in praying for an opportunity to preach at Rome, was just *how* God would answer his prayer. At the time, he was about to leave Corinth and travel to Jerusalem. He hoped to travel from the Holy City to Rome and then on into Spain (**Romans 15:24**). In spite of his best-laid plans, Paul would be arrested, falsely accused, imprisoned, and shipwrecked. Be careful for what you ask.

Note: The characteristics of Paul's prayer

It was **persistent**: *without ceasing...always* It is safe to say Paul probably affected more souls with his praying than with his preaching. There were times when he could not preach, but his prayer life was a constant aspect of who he was.

It was **personal**: *making mention of you* In the last chapter of *Romans*, Paul mentions no less than twenty six believers by name, yet he had never visited the city.

It was **particular**: Paul's prayer included various details; he even asked for a prosperous journey to Rome. There is no detail in life so trivial we cannot make it a matter of prayer.

It was **pliant**: *by the will of God* Paul knew if he was to obtain anything in life it must be in the will of God. He simply prayed as Christ prayed in **Matthew 26:39**.

It was **permissive**: While longing to be in Rome, Paul made no attempt to dictate to God by what means he should get there. He was willing to accomplish this trip by any means...as long as he got to Rome.

It was **pure**: *for God is my witness* Paul was not playing with words: he had prayed to God and knew he had been heard; no other proof was necessary.

He loved them 1:11-12 Here is the true heart of a pastor. The word *long* carries the idea that 'I am homesick for you.' Having never been to the capital, Paul sensed he was welcomed among the believers.

At first glance, it might seem as if Paul is somewhat haughty in his desire to come to Rome and 'teach these folks a thing or two.' But in the very next breath, he clarifies his purpose, lest anyone should misunderstand: it is not just so he might give them something, but at the same time he could receive something from them in return. He would receive comfort while they would get a spiritual gift from his doctrinal teaching.

He was in debt to them 1:13-14 In **verse thirteen**, we have the old English word *let*, meaning 'to hinder'. Paul was telling the believers at Rome he had intended to get to their city much sooner, but had been hindered for reasons not known to us. Obviously from Paul's track record, this was no mere excuse; he had been engaged with preaching the gospel. As a matter of fact, there were times when even Paul must have wondered if Rome would ever to be a reality in his ministry. To calm his spirit on the matter, the Lord brought a special message to him (**Acts 23:11**).

Note: hindrances are not always evidence that our purposes are wrong. We need to be careful not to abandon a plan when God is merely saying 'not yet.' God often directed Paul through hindrances in his life. Acts 16:7

It is interesting to see Paul wrote these words about being in debt several years after his ministry had begun. He had preached on thousands of occasions and had seen many come to Christ; yet, he spoke here as though he was just starting to pay back his debt.

Understand, because God had saved him, Paul was made a debtor...but not *to God*. The Lord had paid sin's debt to the last cent. Rather, Paul's debt was *to the world*. He owed it to everyone with whom he came in contact to share the good news of Jesus Christ.