

## The Christian Manual: Study 1, Romans 1:1-17

Romans Studies for Teens by Mike Apodaca, MA



Begin with prayer for wisdom from God and for the presence of the Spirit.

Note: In a Bible Study, as much as possible ask the questions and let the students answer. Where they cannot, you supply the answer and keep everything flowing.

Introduction: What does it mean to be a Christian?

### Chapter 1 Sender and Receiver

#### Section 1: Romans 1:1-7 More than an Introduction

**1** Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God— <sup>2</sup>the gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures <sup>3</sup>regarding his Son, who as to his earthly life was a descendant of David,<sup>4</sup>and who through the Spirit of holiness was appointed the Son of God in power by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord. <sup>5</sup>Through him we received grace and apostleship to call all the Gentiles to the

obedience that comes from faith for his name's sake. <sup>6</sup>And you also are among those Gentiles who are called to belong to Jesus Christ.

<sup>7</sup>To all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be his holy people:

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul begins by introducing himself in ways that are meaningful to the Church of Christ in Rome. He starts by explaining what he is by his choice and what he is by Christ's choice.

By his own choice, Paul is a servant of Christ. The word servant here means slave. Paul has voluntarily placed himself as Christ's slave.

This is something we all have done when we accepted Christ as our Lord. It is a matter of our relationship, our roles. He is the Lord (he calls all the shots) and we are the slaves (we do whatever He says). This relationship is the key to the Christian life. Whatever we do, we do with the hands He owns, whatever we say, we say with the tongue He owns, whatever we think, we do with the brain He owns.

Paul is also an Apostle who is set apart for the gospel of God. This is what Jesus called him to when He met him on the road to Damascus. An Apostle is a representative who has the full authority

of the one who sent him<sup>1</sup>. We would say he has the “Power of attorney.” As an Apostle, Paul has been set apart to spread the gospel (or good news) of God. He goes on to explain the good news.

1. The gospel is not something new. It was foretold by the prophets in the Old Testament. It was the fulfillment of all God’s movement through history to this point. Jesus is what the Old Testament is for. Paul often spent days in synagogues explaining this.
2. Jesus was physically a descendent of David (we can see this in Matthew chapter 1). The Old Testament taught that the Messiah would come from the line of David. (See Psalm 89:35-36).
3. Through the Holy Spirit Jesus is the Son of God, by virtue of his resurrection. G. C. Berkouwer wrote, “The very fact that Christ is the “firstfruits” signifies what his resurrection implies. It is not just an isolated, remarkable event, but a beginning, a foundation, a pledge, a guarantee. It could be preached and had to be preached in order to bring out its implications, so that it would provide a foundation for the

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Banks compares this relationship to that of the Hebrew shaliach. “The shaliach is a messenger of another person with a special, generally limited, task to perform on his behalf. Outside the boundaries of that commission he has no authority. He has importance only so far as he represents the one who sends him and faithfully carries out his will. He is viewed really as an extension of that person.” *Paul’s Idea of Community*, pg. 172.

hope and expectation of a blessed future.”<sup>2</sup> Jesus died, but is not dead. Through the Holy Spirit He resurrected and was exalted to the right hand of God and to Sonship with God, which we share when we are in Him.

4. He is Jesus—the incarnation of the Word Who lived among us. He is Christ—The One anointed by the Holy Spirit to be prophet, priest, and king. He is Lord—The One to Whom all will bow; the ruler over all.
5. It is through Him that Paul received grace (the undeserved favor of God in spite of his sins) and Apostleship to the Gentiles (those not in the Jewish faith).
6. He has called the Gentiles for obedience (doing what God says) from faith (trusting God) for the purpose of glorifying His Name (the name was the person in Jewish thinking). The Gentiles have been called to trust and obey to bring God glory.

Paul then tells us things about the people he is writing to. They are some of the Gentiles God is calling to Himself. They belong to Him. He owns them. How much better would our Christian life be if we would just admit that our lives are not ours? We have been bought with a price (1 Corinthians 6:20). We belong to Jesus.

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<sup>2</sup> *Studies in Dogmatics: The Work of Christ*, pg. 195

Next Paul explains why the Romans had been called: They have been called to be holy. Holiness is not hard to explain. It is moral perfection. It is being like God (1 Peter 1:16). It means living like Jesus—being honest, never stealing, living in peace with others, and caring about others. It means not being sexually impure or evil with your mind or words. Being holy sets you apart from the world around you.

## **Section 2: Romans 1:8-17 So Thankful**

<sup>8</sup>First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is being reported all over the world. <sup>9</sup>God, whom I serve in my spirit in preaching the gospel of his Son, is my witness how constantly I remember you <sup>10</sup>in my prayers at all times; and I pray that now at last by God's will the way may be opened for me to come to you.

<sup>11</sup>I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong— <sup>12</sup>that is, that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith. <sup>13</sup>I do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, that I planned many times to come to you (but have been prevented from doing so until now) in order that I might have a harvest among you, just as I have had among the other Gentiles.

<sup>14</sup>I am obligated both to Greeks and non-Greeks, both to the wise and the foolish.<sup>15</sup>That is why I am so eager to preach the gospel also to you who are in Rome.

<sup>16</sup>For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile. <sup>17</sup>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."

This section is a beautiful stringing together of ideas, like pearls on a necklace.

The first pearl: Paul thanks God for them because their faith is known everywhere. What a great reputation to have. To be known as the people who depend on God for everything—who don't stress over anything. These are people who don't rely on their money, their talent, their health, or their education or opportunities. They don't rely on any of the fragile things of this life. They rely on God.

The second pearl: Paul prays for them often and asks God to let him come to visit them.

The third pearl: He wants to see them to exchange Spiritual gifts. Notice this goes both ways. Paul will be as strengthened by their gifts as they will be by his.

The fourth pearl: He wants to have a harvest of souls for Christ among them. He is obligated to preach the Gospel. This is his life.

The fifth pearl: Paul is not ashamed of the Gospel. Why should he be? Would you be ashamed if you had the cure for cancer? Would you hide it and pretend it didn't exist? Of course not. And the Gospel is more important than this. It is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes. It is the only thing that cures the universal eternal terminal disease—separation from God in hell forever.

The sixth pearl: It is in this Gospel that God's righteousness is revealed. Those who put their faith in Jesus make an exchange with Him. The righteousness of Christ becomes our righteousness and our sin goes on Him at the cross (2 Corinthians 5:21).

The seventh pearl: That we begin our life in Christ by faith—when we first believe in the gospel—and we continue in faith as we live our lives in Christ trusting God's Word. Ranald Macaulay wrote, “. . . in the Bible faith is true faith only when based on the objective truths of Scripture. When these truths are denied, there may be

faith in the sense of a religious or mystical experience, but it cannot be called Christian faith.”<sup>3</sup>

**Digging Deeper:** Look at verse 1

Who is this man, Paul?

Paul comes into the New Testament as a man named Saul who is violently against the church. He was present agreeing with the stoning of Stephen in Acts 7. He received papers from the officials in Jerusalem to go down to Damascus and to arrest those who had put their faith in Christ there. Paul, speaking of his former life, describes it like this:

<sup>5</sup> circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; <sup>6</sup> as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for righteousness based on the law, faultless. (Philippians 3:5-6)

So how did this persecutor of the church become a willing slave of Jesus? He met Jesus face-to-face on the road to Damascus. He was struck blind and felt the darkness that his soul had been living in. He communicated with Christ during this time and was told that Ananias would be coming to pray for him. Then he listened and understood what God had been doing through Christ and became a believer and was baptized and sent out.

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<sup>3</sup> *Being Human*, pg. 147



## WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED?

Paul hit the ground running when he wrote to the Romans. He embedded in this introduction many deep Christian words and concepts.

He introduces himself in two ways: He is a slave of Christ by choice and he is an Apostle of the gospel to the Gentiles by calling from Christ. Any authority he has over the Roman church is Christ's authority working through him.

Paul expresses his desire to visit the Romans and to share together their gifts for their mutual upbuilding (edification). Paul wants to have a harvest among the Romans, as he has had in so many other places.

Paul explains that he is not ashamed of the Gospel. It is the power of God for salvation to all who believe, the Jews first and then the Gentiles. This is Paul's understanding of the Gospel in a nutshell. It is what the rest of the book is all about. It is all that matters. When our lives are over we will discover that our time on earth was just a blink of the eyes compared to our eternity. What really matters is where we will spend all eternity, not how we might build our lives here on earth. God has created us to be in relationship with Him. We lost that relationship in Adam because of sin. Jesus has come to restore that relationship. By believing, by faith, we enter into this relationship with God that will last for all eternity. We continue living our Christian lives, moment by moment, in faith. We trust God and not our circumstances; we lean on Him and not our human resources; we count on Him and not on ourselves or other people or human systems. When God is our foundation, we will never fall.



## CONNECT: Icebreaker

This is the first night, so we really want the students to get to know each other. Do the following scavenger hunt. Tally the points at the end and applaud the winner:

1. Find the person with a birthday closest to yours—1 point. If it is the same day—2 points.
2. Find a person with the same favorite story in the Bible as you—1 point.
3. Find a person with the same favorite movie as you—1 point.
4. Find a person who has eaten out at the same place you have in the last week—1 point.
5. Find a person whose least favorite subject in school is the same as yours—1 point.
6. Find a person whose favorite ice cream flavor is the same as yours—1 point.
7. Find a person who has been to the same amusement park that you have this year—1 point. If it has been in the last month—2 points.
8. Find a person who has three letters in their first name the same as yours—1 point.
9. Find a person who has read the same book you have this year—1 point. If they have read it in the last month—2 points.
10. Find a person who has eaten a vegetable that you have eaten in the last week—1 point.



## WHAT DOES IT SAY?

### Section 1 Romans 1:1-7

Paul doesn't waste words talking about himself, trying to convince the Romans that he was something they should listen to. He doesn't lay out his academic degrees. Paul simply says that he is a slave of Jesus and called by Him to be an Apostle of the Gospel to the Gentiles.

Paul explains what this Gospel—this good news—is. It is what has come about through Jesus. It is not a new thing. Rather, it is what every bit of the Old Testament Scripture is pointing toward. It is Jesus, the Son of David, whose resurrection from the dead, by the Spirit, made Him the Son of God and gave us the possibility of also being sons and daughters of God in Him.

Paul's ministry has been to call the Gentiles to obedience to God.

### Section 2 Romans 1:8-17

Paul goes on to express his love for the church of Rome and his desire to visit them (something he was able to do later). The Romans were famous for their faith, their trust in God.

What does Paul want among the Romans? He wants a harvest, to bring in more and more people for God. He also wants the mutual building of faith that happens when brothers and sisters in Christ get together to encourage one another.

Paul is not ashamed of the Gospel because of what it does—it is God's only means to save people from eternity apart from God.



## WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

### Section 1 Read Romans 1:1-7

1. How does Paul introduce himself to the Romans? What do you notice about what he says and what he doesn't say about himself? What has he chosen and what has Christ chosen for him?
2. Is the Gospel something completely new to the Jews? Why is this important?
3. What did the resurrection of Jesus declare? What does it mean to us that Jesus is the Son of God?
4. The Romans are called to obedience. Obedience to what? What are we called to obedient to as Christians? How can we do this?
5. The Romans are also called to be holy people—what does this mean? How is it possible to become holy?

### Section 2 Read Romans 1:8-17

1. What do you think your friends say about your faith in God?
2. Paul prays for the Romans. Why? What is accomplished by prayer?
3. What do you receive from others in this group that encourages your faith?

What is the gospel? What does the gospel save us from? How does the gospel change us in this life? Who does the gospel have the power to help? Paul is not ashamed of this gospel and wants to share it in Rome. How do you feel about the gospel? Who can you share it with? How will you do this?



## HOW DOES IT APPLY?

The Romans were a church group with a reputation—they were known for their faith in Christ. What a wonderful thing to be known for. Faith in Christ is complete dependence on Him, moment-by-moment in our lives. It is never having a moment where we feel we are apart from him, individuals, relying on ourselves or anything other than Him.

A. W. Tozer said it like this: “Always remember, God never tells you anything enabling you to get along without Him. And if you were to memorize the whole Bible by heart, you would still need the presence of God and the living influence of the Holy Ghost living within you to enable you to live even the tiniest verse of that Bible.”<sup>4</sup>

One of our biggest problems as Christians is that we separate out the things we want God to handle (salvation, miracles, holding the universe together, etc.), and the things we will handle (our daily lives, our relationships, etc.). But God doesn’t see it this way. He sees our lives as a whole. He wants it all. He wants us to rise in the morning recognizing that He is Lord over every second of our lives, and calling on Him to enable us to live for Him by His Holy Spirit. He wants us to go on from there, spending the day in prayer and with a consciousness that we are living in the very presence of God. All we do is before Him.<sup>5</sup>

God has saved us for Himself, to be with Him always. When we come to this realization, we will live authentic Christian lives.

<sup>4</sup> *Living as a Christian*, pg. 132

<sup>5</sup> For more help read *Experiencing the Presence of God*, by A. W. Tozer

