

Notes on the Greek New Testament Day 193 – July 12th – Romans 1:1-17

Introduction

Paul followed up his second letter to the Corinthians¹ with a personal visit to Corinth where he stayed for some months (Acts 20:2). It was towards the end of this period that Paul appears to have written this letter to the Christians at Rome. Although he had never visited the church, Paul seems to have known many of the members whom he greets by name in chapter 16. Many of these Christians knew and had worked with Paul: the whole church was probably familiar with his ministry.

Paul wrote to the Christians at Rome because he hoped that he might soon be able to visit them in passing on his way to Spain. He hopes that they may be able to help him on his way and support him in this new area of ministry (Rom 15:23-29).

The origin and character of the church at Rome

We have no clear information concerning the origins of the church at Rome. Clearly it was not founded by Paul, neither would it seem likely that it had been founded by another apostle or person of apostolic standing – Paul is sensitive about building on another person's labours and yet seems keen to forge closer links with the church at Rome.

It is possible that the church at Rome could have its origins in Peter's preaching on the day of Pentecost. Acts 2 tells us that there were, gathered at Jerusalem, Jews and converts to Judaism from every part of the Mediterranean world, including some from Rome (Acts 2:10). It is possible that some of those three thousand who believed and were baptised on that day were 'visitors from Rome' who then took back with them the message of the gospel. The movement of trade between Rome and the rest of the Roman world may also have brought Christians to Rome.

Whatever the precise origin of the church, it would initially have consisted mainly of Jews and would probably not have dissociated itself from the life of the synagogue. But the character of the church appears to have changed *twice* between the time of its origin and when Paul wrote this letter.

In 49 AD the Emperor Claudius banished all Jews from Rome. Suetonius tells us that Claudius did this because "the Jews constantly made disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus." Barrett comments, "This is a not uncommon name, but it is possible that the disturbances were caused by Jewish-Christian controversy" (*The New Testament Background: Selected Documents* p.15). It is possible, therefore, that Jews and proselytes who had embraced Christianity were the cause of arguments within the Jewish community in Rome, just as similar controversy affected the Jewish communities with which Paul had been involved. As a result, Claudius expelled the Jews from Rome, including the Jewish Christians. Among those expelled from Rome were Aquila and Priscilla (Acts 18:2).

In the wake of such banishment, the church in Rome must have become almost entirely Gentile, and probably remained so for some years. During this period it would have developed Gentile leadership and a character, perspective and practices which would have reflected its Gentile membership – perhaps even extending to a particular understanding of the relationship between 'church' and 'state.'

Claudius died in 54 AD and his decree banishing Jews from Rome lapsed. Jews, including Christian Jews, began to return to the city. The reference to Priscilla and Aquila in Romans 16:3, along perhaps with reference to several others whom Paul had previously worked with is probably a reflection of such migrations.

It is not difficult to imagine the tensions that must have developed between Jewish and Gentile Christians at Rome. The returning Jews must have felt that the church was theirs:

- they had been the founding members;
- the gospel message concerned the Christ, the Jewish Messiah, the one who had come to fulfill all the promises of the Old Testament;
- they were concerned to emphasise the continuity of Judaism and Christianity.

¹ I.e. the letter we know as 2 Corinthians

On the other hand, the Gentile Christians had functioned effectively as a church without the Jews. They must have felt that the church at Rome was now their church, a church with a distinctively Gentile outlook:

- they probably emphasised the distinction between Judaism and Christianity – they may even have thought that God somehow endorsed, at the theological level, what Caesar had done at the political level and had written Jews out of the covenant;
- since Claudius had expelled the troublesome Jews they would have wanted to distance themselves from Jews and perhaps emphasised that the Christian message was no threat to Roman government;
- they may well have laid little emphasis on the Old Testament, perhaps suggesting that it was no longer relevant in the light of Jesus and his teaching. In particular they would not have followed Levitical law regarding food and days.

Much of this picture is necessarily conjectural but it is given credibility by much of what Paul has to say in his letter to the Romans, as we shall see below.

Why did Paul write his letter to the Romans?

Paul wrote the letter to prepare the way for a visit he planned to make to them (Rom 1:11-13). He considers that his ministry in Asia Minor, Macedonia and Achaia is now complete: there are significant churches planted in each of these regions and the continuing task of propagating the gospel in these areas can be left to them. Paul must now move on to new areas where the gospel has not yet been preached (Rom 15:17-22). Paul has decided that this new region will be Spain and he plans to go there via Rome (Rom 15:23-29). He hopes that the church in Rome may take a real interest in this work and, just as the church at Philippi supported Paul in his ministry in Achaia, so he hopes that the church in Rome may offer practical support for his ministry in Spain (see particularly 15:24).

But Paul's plan to visit the Christians at Rome is not merely a means to an end: Paul wants to visit *them* and to enjoy fellowship with them, encourage them and be encouraged by them (Rom 1:11-12). Paul clearly knew a number of the members of the church (see Romans 16) and had often wanted to come and visit them (Rom 1:13).

Since Paul knows something of the church at Rome, his letter seeks also to address some of the hot issues within the church. In particular he is anxious to heal the division between Jewish and Gentile believers within the church:

- From the opening verses of the letter he is keen to stress both the continuity and discontinuity between Judaism and Christianity: Jesus has come in fulfilment of the Old Testament Scriptures and is the promised son of David, the Messiah (Rom 1:3); but he is one who also has brought in a new age through his resurrection from the dead (Rom 1:4). The gospel message which characterises this new age calls Gentiles (and Jews) to submit to the Christ of God (Rom 1:5).
- Paul shows that both Jews and Gentiles are by nature rebels against God and are the subjects of God's wrath (1:18-2:16).
- Though Jews have the privilege of having been entrusted with God's revelation, this is of no benefit apart from faith. And for Paul, faith is, by definition, faith *in Jesus Christ*. In particular, Paul focusses on the Jews possession of the law: there is no virtue in possessing and knowing the law if you do not live by it. Yet the Old Testament itself bears witness to the fact that, far from commending them to God, the law condemns those who live under it (2:17-3:20).
- The people of God are those who have been redeemed through the atoning sacrifice of God's Son. They are defined then not by parentage or ethnicity but simply by faith in Christ. God is God both of Jews and Gentiles (3:21-31).
- Paul shows that God accepted Abraham, the patriarch of the people of God, through faith, a faith analogous to the faith of the Christian who believes in one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead. Thus Abraham is the father of both Jewish and Gentile *believers* (Rom 4).
- In the latter half of Romans 5 Paul draws an analogy between Adam and Christ. Just as Adam's sin affected the whole human race, so also the work of Christ is of universal significance. He is the second Adam, the head of a new humanity. His work is as relevant to the Gentile as it is to the Jew. Paul forces Jewish believers to read the Old Testament against the opening chapters of Genesis: from the beginning the Old Testament was concerned with the plight of the *world* and the salvation of the *world*. Abraham and the Jews were chosen for the sake of the world.

- Romans 7 is a notoriously difficult chapter but, reading it against the context of tension between law-keeping Jewish believers and Gentile believers at Rome, it may be seen as Paul's comment on a life lived by the principle of law-keeping. In contrast, Romans 8 describes the Christian life as God intended it to be lived – life in the Spirit. It is clear that, despite his Jewish origins, Paul's sympathies do not lie with Jewish believers who seek to live by the law.
- In Romans 9-11 Paul provides us with a panoramic view of the purposes of God. At the moment the Jews (by and large) have rejected the Messiah. Though this is immensely painful to Paul he understands that this is all part of the great purpose of God. Their rejection of the Messiah was necessary since Christ had to die as an atoning sacrifice for the sin of the world. Their continuing rejection of Christ has forced the gospel to be taken to and preached to the Gentiles. But Paul believes that the day will come when the Jews will be so moved to envy over God's blessing upon the Gentiles that they too will turn to Christ. Then God's saving plan will be complete as the full number of Jews and Gentiles will be included together among his people. The Gentile believers are not to look down on the Jews but are to remember that the gospel message has its roots in Judaism and will have its consummation in Jews turning to Christ.
- In the first part of Romans 13, Paul addresses the issue of how the Christian should view and behave towards civil authority. Here again, he may be addressing issues which formed part of the tension or disagreement between Gentile and Jewish believers. Jewish believers may have had an over negative view of the Roman authorities. Paul's instruction here is rooted in Old Testament passages such as Daniel, Isaiah and even Esther.
- In chapter 14 Paul addresses conflicts between the 'weak' and the 'strong.' In context, the 'weak' would appear to be Jewish believers who continued to observe the Levitical laws and who were sensitive about food and the observance of certain days. Paul's sympathies again lie with those who feel no need to observe the Levitical law, but he calls on both sides to respect and accept one another just as Christ has accepted them all (15:7).

Paul's letter to the Romans is therefore not an abstract treatise concerning the gospel. It is a letter written to a particular group of people, a letter which seeks to address specific issues of debate among these people. In this sense it is an 'occasional' document. However, since it also addresses issues which have been at the heart of Paul's own ministry and personal history it is not wholly incorrect to suggest that Romans is also Paul's gospel manifesto: it expounds his understanding of the gospel, its relationship to the Old Testament and the nature of the New Covenant inaugurated by Christ; it is a declaration and exposition of the 'righteousness of God', God's faithfulness to his covenant and fulfilment of its promises in Jesus the Christ. In making the nature of his ministry and preaching clear, Paul is seeking not only to minister to the Christians in Rome and heal some of the divisions among them, but is also seeking their support in taking this same gospel to those in Spain who have not yet heard of Jesus Christ. Paul has a mission fired by a vision of empire which rivals and dwarfs that of Rome; it is not Caesar but Jesus who is Lord, and it is his kingdom or empire, characterised by righteousness and peace, which is destined to dominate the world.

An Outline of the Message of Romans

The following helpful outline of the message of Romans is taken directly from the introduction to Tom Wright's commentary in *The New Interpreter's Bible*, (pp. 405-406).

"Chapters 1-4: God's gospel unveils the fact that in the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, the God of Israel has been true to the covenant established with Abraham and has thereby brought saving order to the whole world. In the face of a world in rebellion and a chosen people unfaithful to their commission, God has, through the surrogate faithfulness of Jesus the Messiah, created a worldwide – that is, a Jewish and Gentile – family for Abraham, marked out by the covenant sign of faith.

"Chapters 5-8: God has thereby done what the covenant was set up to do: to address and solve the problem expressed in biblical terms as the sin of Adam. In the Messiah, Jesus, God has done for this new people what was done for Israel of old in fulfilment of the promise to Abraham: Redeemed from the Egypt of enslavement to sin, they are led through the wilderness of the present life by the Spirit (not by the Torah), and they look forward to the inheritance, which will consist of the entire redeemed creation. This is how the creator will finally put the whole world to rights. All this is the result of God's astonishing, unchanging, self-giving covenant love expressed completely and finally in the death of Jesus.

"*Chapters 9-11*: This section highlights the peculiar tragedy of the gospel's revelation of God's righteousness – namely, the ironic failure of Israel to believe in the Messiah. This, too, however, turns out to be held within the strange purposes of God, whereby Israel's fall, acting out on a grand scale the death of Jesus, is the means by which salvation can extend to the whole world. This cannot mean that Jews themselves are thereby forever debarred from participating in the covenant blessing; Paul himself is a counter-example, and God desires that even now, by recognising that it is indeed their promised blessings that the Gentiles are enjoying, more of Paul's fellow Jews will come to share in new covenant membership. Gentile Christians, therefore, are warned severely against anti-Jewish arrogance. The section ends with a paean of praise for the strange but glorious purposes of God.

"*Chapters 12-16*: The community that is created by this gospel must live as the true renewed humanity, in its internal and external life. In particular, it must reflect God's intention that Jew and Gentile come together as one worshipping body in Christ. Paul's own plans are bent to this end, and his greetings to different groups in the Roman church may indicate his desire to bring together disparate groups in common worship and mission."

Works frequently referenced in these notes on Romans

- Barrett, CK *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, San Francisco, Harper & Row, 1957.
 Dunn, JDG *Romans*, Word Biblical Commentary Vols 38A, 38B, Dallas, Word, 1988.
 Moo, Douglas, J *Romans: The NIV Application Commentary*, Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2000.
 Murray, John *The Epistle to the Romans*, 2 Vols, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1959 & 1965.
 Wright, NT *The Letter to The Romans*, The New Interpreter's Bible, Vol 10, Nashville, Abingdon Press, 2002.

Verses 1-7

The opening address is longer in this epistle than in any other of Paul's letters. "Perhaps because he was writing to a church he had never visited before, Paul spends six verses identifying himself before he mentions the recipients (v.7a) and extends them a greeting (v.7b)." Moo.

Wright comments, "The opening seven verses of the letter move swiftly from Paul to the gospel, back to Paul and his ministry, and out into the world, which introduces the Roman Christians. As usual, he introduces, within the formal structure of a letter opening, the themes that will occupy him in what is to come."

Verse 1

Παῦλος δοῦλος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ, κλητὸς ἀπόστολος, ἀφορισμένος εἰς εὐαγγέλιον θεοῦ

δοῦλος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ "While clearly revealing Paul's sense of subservience to his Lord (the word 'servant' ... can also be translated 'slave'), this title also suggests his status. For the Old Testament 'servant of the Lord' was applied especially to outstanding figures in Israel's history, such as Moses (e.g., Josh 14:7) and David (e.g., Ps. 18:1)." Moo. Wright reminds us that Χριστός is not a proper name but the title, Messiah, and that it has kingly overtones. Paul is a servant of king Jesus.

κλητός, η, ον called, invited

κλητὸς ἀπόστολος "One of those whom Jesus himself had appointed to represent him and to provide the foundation for his church (see Eph. 2:20)." Moo. Cf. also 1 Cor 9:1 where Paul defines an apostle in terms of one who has seen the risen Jesus.

ἀφορισμένος Verb, perf pass ptc, m n s

ἀφορίζω separate, set apart, appoint

The term *Pharisee* means 'set apart'. Through his encounter with Christ, Saul the Pharisee had become the apostle Paul, set apart to the work of the Gospel.

εὐαγγέλιον, ου n good news, gospel

"God had appointed Paul to the special task of proclaiming and explaining the good news of God's intervention in Jesus Christ." Moo. Wright comments on the term εὐαγγέλιον, "In Paul's Jewish world, the word looked back to Isa 40:9 and 52:7, where a messenger was sent to bring to Jerusalem the good news of Babylon's defeat, the end of Israel's exile, and the personal return of YHWH to Zion. In the pagan world Paul addressed, the same Greek word referred to an announcement of the accession or the birthday of a ruler or emperor. Here already we find Paul at the interface of his two worlds. His message about Jesus was both the fulfilment of prophecy, as v.2 indicates, and the announcement of one whose rule posed a challenge to all other rulers."

Verse 2

ὁ προεπηγγειλᾶτο διὰ τῶν προφητῶν αὐτοῦ ἐν
γραφαῖς ἁγίαις

προεπαγγελῶμαι promise from the
beginning, promise long ago
προφητῆς, ου m prophet

All who wrote of Christ in the OT, not just those whom we commonly call prophets, cf. Lk 24:27; Acts 2:30.

γραφῆ, ης f Scripture, passage of
Scripture, OT Scriptures

The relationship between the OT and the New is a major theme of this epistle. The Gospel has its roots in the OT.

Verses 3-4

The parallelism in verses 3 & 4 suggests that Paul may have been quoting an ancient creedal formula or hymn. "Moreover, the verses contain some language, such as 'Spirit of holiness,' that Paul uses nowhere else, and some ideas, such as the Davidic descent of Jesus, that do not feature prominently in his teaching. When we add to these considerations a natural desire on Paul's part to establish common ground with the Roman Christians, whom he has never met, the conclusion he is quoting from another source in these verses seems well established... Just as the preacher quotes the stanza of a popular hymn to bring a point home, so Paul may well want to cite lines from a well-known early Christian hymn to communicate the truth of Christ to the Roman Christians." Moo.

Wright responds, "Whether or not Paul wrote vv. 3-4 from scratch (and we must guard against assuming that a writer such as Paul was incapable of dictating an apparently formulaic statement off the top of his head, especially as he had countless occasions to sum up his message orally before a wide variety of audiences), the passage as it stands offers a striking statement of that messianic view of Jesus that we shall discover at the heart of the letter."

The NIV (following Calvin, Bengel, Hodge etc.) suggests here that Paul is speaking of Christ's human and divine nature. However, Murray follows Vos (see *The Pauline Eschatology*, p.155f.) in seeing verses 3 & 4 as reference not to the two distinct natures of Christ, but to two successive aspects of his redemptive work. By his incarnation he identified himself with the objects of promise (verse 3 should perhaps be read against the background of Israel being referred to as God's son). By his resurrection and exaltation he secures for them, the heirs of the promise, the full rights of sons.

Wright states that it is a two-part statement about Jesus' Messiahship. He was born of David's line and his resurrection declares to the world that he really was the Messiah and had been all along. But he also echoes the point made by Murray when he writes, "This relationship between 1:3-4 and the rest of Romans indicates what Paul means by adding 'according to the flesh' and 'according to the spirit.' Jesus the Messiah is the one in whom God's people find their identity and salvation; he has come where they are in order to rescue them (more fully stated in 8:3-4; cf. Gal 4:4-5). His human, 'fleshly' (in Paul's sense) identity is the place where he does for Adamic humanity that which Adamic humanity could not do for itself. Verse 3 thus looks ahead to 5:12-21 and all the elements of chaps. 6-8 that follow from it. It is also evoked by 9:5, which, as we shall see, restates a very similar two-part christology, making it the ground plan of the argument of chaps. 9-11: Jesus is Israel's Messiah according to the flesh and is also now explicitly) 'God over all, blessed for ever.'" On these verses, see particularly, Richard B. Gaffin, *The Centrality of the Resurrection*, Grand Rapids, Baker Book House, 1978, pp.98-114.

Verse 3

περὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ, τοῦ γενομένου ἐκ
σπέρματος Δαυὶδ κατὰ σάρκα,

τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ "In the OT, 'son of God' can refer to angels (Gen 6:2; Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7; Dan 3:25; cf. Dan 3:28; Song of Three 26). But it's better known referents are Israel, adopted as God's child explicitly at the time of the exodus and looking back to that moment in order to plead for subsequent deliverance (Exod 4:22; Jer 31:9; Hos 11:1: 13:13; Mal 1:6); and the king, adopted as YHWH's firstborn son – the seed of David who is also the son of God (1 Sam 7:14 ... 1 Chr 17:13; Pss 2:7; 89:26-27). These two senses belong together, since in some Jewish thought the Davidic king represents Israel, so that what is true of him is true of the people." Wright.

σπερμα, τοσ η seed, offspring

Cf. Gal 4:4.

σαρξ, σαρκος f flesh, physical body,
human nature

Verse 4

τοῦ ὀρισθέντος υἱοῦ θεοῦ ἐν δυνάμει κατὰ
πνεῦμα ἁγιοσύνης ἐξ ἀναστάσεως νεκρῶν,
Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν,

ὀρισθέντος Verb, aor pass ptc, m gen s ὀρίζω
appoint, designate

δυνάμει Noun, dat s δυναμις

"The apostle is dealing with some particular event in the history of the Son of God incarnate by which he was *instated* in a position of sovereignty and invested with power, an event which in respect of investiture with power surpassed everything that could previously be ascribed to him in his incarnate state." Murray.

Wright, however, lays the emphasis on the demonstration and declaration of Jesus' Messiahship. "A crucified Messiah was a failed Messiah... This is why it took something utterly extraordinary to make anyone suppose that Jesus was in fact the Messiah. Paul is clear: it was the resurrection that marked our Jesus as 'son of God' (v. 4)."

On ἐν δυνάμει Wright comments, "This phrase seems to refer both to the power of God that raised Jesus from the dead (see 1 Cor 6:14; 15:24, 43; 2 Cor 13:4; Eph 1:19-20; Phil 3:10) and that thereby declared his identity as Messiah, and to the powerful nature of his sonship, through which he confronts all the powers of the world, up to and including death itself, with the news of a different and more effective type of power altogether. Paul, of course, sees this same power at work now, by the Spirit, through the proclamation of the gospel and in the lives of those who are 'in the Messiah' (see, e.g., 1:16; 11:23; 15:13; 1 Cor 1:24; 2:4-5)."

αγιωσυνη, ης f holiness

πνεῦμα ἁγιοσύνης is a Semitism meaning Holy Spirit. On the Spirit as breathing life into the dead, cf. Ezek 37:5, 9-10, 14; Joel 3:1-5.

ἀναστασις, εως f resurrection, raising up
νεκρος, α, ον dead

Note the plural νεκρῶν. Jesus has been raised from among the dead: it is the hoped for resurrection of the dead arrived in the middle of time in the Lord Jesus. "Paul saw the event of Easter as the start and foretaste of the long-promised new age, 'the age to come' that he and many other Jews had been expecting. The resurrection told Paul not only who Jesus was (the Messiah), but also what time it was (the start of the 'age to come')." Wright.

"By his resurrection and ascension the Son of God incarnate entered upon a new phase of sovereignty and was endowed with new power correspondent with and unto the exercise of the mediatorial lordship which he exercises as head over all things to his body, the church. It is in this same resurrection context and with allusion to Christ's resurrection endowment that the apostle says, 'The last Adam was made life-giving Spirit' (1 Cor 15:45). And it is to this that he refers elsewhere when he says, 'The Lord is the Spirit' (2 Cor 3:17). 'Lord' in this instance, as frequently in Paul, is the Lord Christ. The only conclusion is that Christ is now by reason of the resurrection so endowed with and in control of the Holy Spirit that, without any confusion of the distinct persons, Christ is identified with the Spirit and is called 'the Lord of the Spirit' (2 Cor 3:18). Thus, when we come back to the expression 'according to the Spirit of holiness', our inference is that it refers to that stage of pneumatic endowment upon which Jesus entered through his resurrection." Murray.

So also Moo who writes, "Jesus' resurrection, concluding and validating the messianic work of redemption, gave him new power to dispense salvation to all who would believe in him (see esp. v.16)."

Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν "Paul's initial summary of the gospel is rounded off with Jesus' full Pauline title: 'Jesus, Messiah, our Lord.' 'Jesus' for Paul regularly refers to the human being, Jesus of Nazareth, now risen and exalted but still the same human Jesus. When Paul writes 'Christ,' he still means 'Messiah,' the one in whom Israel's destiny is summed up and brought to proper fulfilment; the word is on its way to being a name (denoting Jesus but no longer connoting Messiahship), but it has not reached that point in Paul. 'Lord' expresses both the exalted humanity of Jesus, including his superior position to all other 'lords' in the world, and the sometimes explicit ascription of divinity. This is seen most clearly when Paul, speaking of Jesus, quotes passages from the LXX where 'Lord' (κύριος *kyrios*) stands, as he well knew, for 'YHWH,' the divine name (e.g., Rom 10:13). The possessive pronoun 'our' is not a way of limiting the sphere of Jesus' lordship, but of giving explicit allegiance to the one who is, for Paul, lord of the whole world, supreme over all others... Note that for Paul, 'the gospel' is not a system of salvation, a message first and foremost about how human beings get saved. It is an announcement about Jesus, the Messiah, the Lord." Wright.

Verse 5

δι' οὗ ἐλάβομεν χάριν καὶ ἀποστολὴν εἰς ὑπακοὴν πίστεως ἐν πᾶσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν ὑπὲρ τοῦ ὀνόματος αὐτοῦ,

ἐλάβομεν Verb, aor act indic, 1 pl λαμβανῶ

The plural refers either to apostleship, 'we apostles' or perhaps to Paul and his missionary band.

ἀποστολή, ης f apostleship, mission

Moo thinks χάριτι and ἀποστολήν are closely linked, '...grace of being an apostle' cf. Acts 26:12-18. So also Wright.

ὑπακοή, ης f obedience
πιστις, εως f faith, trust

Not 'the obedience that comes from faith' (NIV) but 'the obedience which consists in faith.' Faith is seen as an act of submission and therefore obedience and as the source of all true obedience to God (cf. 10:16; 16:26; 1 Thess 1:3; Acts 6:7). "Paul uses this unusual formulation as a deliberate counter to the Jewish 'works of the law.' What marks God's people is no longer deeds done in obedience to the law, but an obedience that stems from, accompanies, and displays faith." Moo. Wright comments, "Obedience' is a more prominent theme in Romans than elsewhere in the NT (elsewhere in Paul only in 2 Cor 7:15; 10:5-6; Phlm 21). It serves as a shorthand both for the total work of Jesus the Messiah, over against that of Adam (5:19), and as the sphere or realm into which, or under the rule of which, Christians come through baptism (6:12-17). Paul can again use it as a summary of that which he seeks to bring about among the nations (15:18; cf. 16:19)... To bring the nations into 'obedience' would therefore mean to bring them into the family of this one God." Paul's ministry involves summoning all people to allegiance to Jesus as Christ and Lord. "This faith is actually the human faithfulness that answers to God's faithfulness." Wright.

ἔθνεσιν Noun, dat pl ἔθνος, ος n nation, people; τα ἔ. Gentiles
ὄνομα, τος n name, person

Verse 6

ἐν οἷς ἐστε καὶ ὑμεῖς κλητοὶ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, κλητος, η, ον see v.1

κλητοὶ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ Not called by Jesus Christ, for in Paul's theology it is the Father who calls. Christians are rather the property of Christ – they belong to him. "They stand in this relationship not because they have chosen it but because they have been called to it by God himself just as Paul, against his own inclination and will, was called to be an apostle." Barrett.

Verse 7

πᾶσιν τοῖς οὖσιν ἐν Ῥώμῃ ἀγαπητοῖς θεοῦ, κλητοῖς ἀγίοις: χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη ἀπὸ θεοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.

οὖσιν Verb, pres ptc, m & n dat pl εἶμι

ἐν Ῥώμῃ is omitted by a few MSS. Metzger suggests an accident in transcription.

ἀγαπητος, η, ον beloved

The love of God that moves him to redeem a people for himself is another central theme of Romans (cf. 5:5, 8; 8:37-39).

ἅγιος, α, ον holy, set apart to or by God

"Nothing is implied about moral behaviour, though their separation from the world and for Christ is bound to have moral consequences. They are singled out as the people of God because of the love God has for them. This is the root out of which Christian ... actions grow." Barrett.

εἰρηνη, ης f peace

ἀπὸ θεοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ The single preposition governs the two nouns that follow and serves to couple closely God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ as the single source of covenant blessing.

Verse 8

Πρῶτον μὲν εὐχαριστῶ τῷ θεῷ μου διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ περὶ πάντων ὑμῶν, ὅτι ἡ πίστις ὑμῶν καταγγέλλεται ἐν ὅλῳ τῷ κόσμῳ.

It is Paul's usual pattern to follow the salutation with thanksgiving. The notable exception is Galatians.

πρῶτον is not followed by a 'second' or 'third.' "Paul may simply have forgotten to go on with his enumeration, or the word 'first' may indicate priority rather than sequence, 'first of all.'" Moo.

εὐχαριστέω thank, give thanks

διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ Jesus has created access to God and is therefore the one *through whom* prayer is made to the Father.

πίστις, εως f faith, trust, the Christian faith

The faith of these Roman Christians was well known (cf. 1 Thess 1:8). Comparison with Acts 28:21f would seem to indicate that their faith was well known among *other Christians*.

καταγγέλλω proclaim, make known
ὅλος, η, ον whole, all, complete, entire

Verse 9

μάρτυς γάρ μου ἐστὶν ὁ θεός, ᾧ λατρεύω ἐν τῷ πνεύματί μου ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ, ὡς ἀδιαλείπτως μνησθῆναι ὑμῶν ποιῶμαι

On Paul's use of an 'oath', cf. 2 Cor 1:23; 11:31; Gal 1:20; 1 Thess 2:5.

μαρτυς, μαρτυρος m witness
λατρεύω serve, worship

ἐν τῷ πνεύματί μου Fee says that the reference is to the Spirit of God resident in Paul. Moo concurs saying, "Paul's own spirit has been caught up in God's Spirit, and he now serves the gospel 'in' and 'by means of' that transformed spirit."

ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ The sense may be "either ... that his announcing of the gospel constitutes in itself an act of worship or in the sense that he worships the God he sees revealed in 'the gospel of his son' (i.e., as in v.3, the gospel concerning the son of God)." Wright.

ἀδιαλείπτως ceaselessly, without ceasing
μνησθῆναι, ας f remembrance, mention

Verse 10

πάντοτε ἐπὶ τῶν προσευχῶν μου, δεόμενος εἴ πως ἤδη ποτε εὐδοωθήσομαι ἐν τῷ θελήματι τοῦ θεοῦ ἐλθεῖν πρὸς ὑμᾶς.

παντοτε always

Most understand the opening phrase of this verse to belong with what precedes it, though Murray prefers to link the words with what follows.

δεομαι ask, beg, pray
πως enclitic particle somehow, in some way
ἤδη adv now; ἤδη ποτε now at last
εὐδοομαι have things go well (for oneself)
θελημα, ατος n will, wish, desire
ἐλθεῖν Verb, aor act infin ἐρχομαι

It was unusual for Paul to visit a church which he had not founded (see 15:20). The reason for him wishing to visit Rome is given in 15:24; he wanted to use Rome as a base from which to take his missionary activity to Spain.

Verse 11

ἐπιποθῶ γὰρ ἰδεῖν ὑμᾶς, ἵνα τι μεταδῶ χάρισμα ὑμῖν πνευματικὸν εἰς τὸ στηριχθῆναι ὑμᾶς,

ἐπιποθεω long for, desire

ἰδεῖν Verb, aor act infin ὁραω see

μεταδῶ Verb, aor act subj, 1 s μεταδιδωμι
share, give, impart

χάρισμα, τος n gift (from God)

πνευματικος, η, ον spiritual, pertaining to
the spirit

The precise nature of the 'spiritual gift' which Paul wished to bestow is unclear.

στηριχθῆναι Verb, aor pass infin στηριζω
strengthen, establish, set firm

Cf. 1 Thess 3:2; 2 Thess 2:17; 3:3.

Verse 12

τοῦτο δέ ἐστιν συμπαρακληθῆναι ἐν ὑμῖν διὰ τῆς ἐν ἀλλήλοις πίστεως ὑμῶν τε καὶ ἐμοῦ.

συμπαρακληθῆναι Verb, aor pass dep infin
συμπαρακαλεομαι be encouraged
together

ἀλλήλων, οισ, ους one another
τε enclitic particle and, and so

Barrett sees verse 12 as an addition or correction to verse 11 which reflects Paul's awareness that the Roman Christians might not recognise his authority. Moo speaks of Paul's "hesitancy to claim too much authority over a community he has not himself founded. It is not, Paul hastily adds (v.12), that the spiritual benefit will flow all one direction, from Paul to the Romans. Rather, he anticipates a time of mutual edification with them, as the faith God has given each individual stimulates and encourages spiritual growth in the others." Cf. 15:14-29.

Verse 13

οὐ θέλω δὲ ὑμᾶς ἀγνοεῖν, ἀδελφοί, ὅτι πολλάκις προσθέμην ἔλθειν πρὸς ὑμᾶς, καὶ ἐκωλύθην ἄχρι τοῦ δεῦρο, ἵνα τινὰ καρπὸν σχῶ καὶ ἐν ὑμῖν καθὼς καὶ ἐν τοῖς λοιποῖς ἔθνεσιν.

θέλω wish, will

ἀγνοεω not know, be ignorant, fail to understand

πολλάκις often, repeatedly, frequently

προτιθεμαι plan, purpose

ἐκωλύθην Verb, aor pass indic, 1 s κωλυω hinder, prevent

ἄχρι (and ἄχρις) until

δευρο adv. come, come here; ἄχρι του δευρο thus far

καρπος, ου m fruit, harvest

σχῶ Verb, fut act indic, 1 s ἔχω

λοιπος, η, ον rest, remaining,

ἔθνεσιν Noun, dat pl ἔθνος, ους n nation, people; τα ἔ. Gentiles

"Since there were at this time probably not more than a few dozen, or at most a couple of hundred, Christians in a city of roughly a million, this would not indicate a lack of confidence in the Roman church's own evangelistic performance or prospects." Wright.

Verse 14

Ἑλλησίν τε καὶ βαρβάρους, σοφοῖς τε καὶ ἀνοήτοις ὀφειλέτης εἰμί·

Ἕλληνας, ηνος m a Greek, non-Jew

τε καὶ see v.12

βαρβαρος, ον non-Greek, uncivilized, foreigner

σοφος, η, ον wise, experienced

ἀνοητος, ον foolish, ignorant

ὀφειλετης, ου m debtor, one indebted

Either a debt of gratitude he owes to all because of their response to his ministry (so Godet), or the obligation placed on him which he has to all. Murray cites 1 Cor 9:16,17 as evidence supporting the latter and Moo says, "Paul has been given a commission from the Lord to be 'apostle to the Gentiles,' and it is this divine mandate, not any personal benefit or emotional satisfaction or marketing strategy, that impels Paul to travel even further afield." So also Wright who comments, "God has entrusted him with a message for them; until he has discharged this commission he is still, in that sense, in their debt, retaining in his possession something that properly belongs to them."

Verse 15

οὕτως τὸ κατ' ἐμὲ πρόθυμον καὶ ὑμῖν τοῖς ἐν Ῥώμῃ εὐαγγελίσασθαι.

ἐμὲ Pronoun, acc s ἐγὼ

προθυμος, ον willing; το π. eagerness

οὕτως τὸ κατ' ἐμὲ πρόθυμον As far as I am concerned.

τοῖς ἐν Ῥώμῃ is again omitted by a few MSS – cf. 1:7.

εὐαγγελίζω act. and midd proclaim the good news

Verses 16-17

Moo speaks of these verses as transitional: they are linked (by γαρ) with the preceding verses, explaining *why* Paul is eager to preach the gospel in Rome, and they also introduce themes central to the main body of the letter. Murray emphasises the OT background to the four pivotal ideas mentioned here – the power of God, salvation, revelation and the righteousness of God. Citing particularly Ps 98:1-2; Is 46:13; 51:5-8; 56:1; 62:1 as examples he says, "It is apparent that the making known of salvation and the showing forth of righteousness are parallel expressions and convey substantially the same thought."

Verse 16

Οὐ γὰρ ἐπαισχύνομαι τὸ εὐαγγέλιον, δύναμις γὰρ θεοῦ ἐστὶν εἰς σωτηρίαν παντὶ τῷ πιστεύοντι, Ἰουδαίῳ τε πρῶτον καὶ Ἕλληνι·

ἐπαισχυνομαι be ashamed

Perhaps litotes, meaning that Paul is proud of, or makes his boast in, the gospel. Paul is perhaps thinking of those who slander him because of the gospel he preaches, cf. 3:8. Cf. also Jesus' words about people being ashamed of him (Mk 8:38 and par.).

The Gospel is not only the declaration of God's saving acts and saving power, it is also the instrument through which God acts in power to save. In short, it is God's power. "Paul has discovered in practice, in city after city, that announcing the good news – that there is one God who now claims the world as his own through the crucified and risen Christ – is in itself powerful and that the power is all God's (cf. 1 Cor 2:4-5; 1 Thess 1:5)." Wright. Wright continues, "Paul, as so often, has expressed this point in such a way as to evoke a biblical tradition. 'In thee, O Lord, do I put my trust,' says the psalmist; 'let me never be ashamed, deliver me in thy righteousness' (Ps 71:1-2; cf. Pss 31:1-3; 141:1; Psalm 71 continues to emphasise the same theme in vv. 15-16, 19, 24, by which time it is the psalmist's opponents who are 'ashamed,' while he continues to speak of God's righteousness). 'Shame' in such a context is what God's people feel when their enemies are triumphing; it is what Israel (and many other peoples) felt in Paul's day, suffering at the hands of Rome. The gospel, and the power it carries, enables Paul to share the position of the psalmist, celebrating God's righteousness and so remaining unashamed in the face of enemies and gainsayers."

σωτηρια, ας f salvation

In Paul's use the term includes the "final deliverance from sin and evil that will come to the believer at death or the Parousia (see esp. 5:9-10; 13:11)." Moo.

Paul uses the verb:

- i) In the past tense, Rom 8:24;
- ii) In the present tense, 1 Cor 1:18
- iii) In the perfect tense, Eph 2:5
- iv) In the future tense, Rom 5:9.

In the Old Testament, 'salvation' has to do with the rescue of Israel from pagan oppression. Wright comments, "As in Phil 3:20-21, Jesus turns out to be the reality of which Caesar is the parody. Just as there is only one 'lord of the world,' so also in the last analysis there is only one 'saviour.'"

πιστευω believe (in), have faith (in)
πρωτον adverb first, in the first place

The omission of πρωτον from a few MSS is perhaps due to the influence of Marcion.

To the Jew first is not an 'accident of history' but a key aspect of the redemptive plan of God (cf. chs 9-11). Paul's words emphasise both "the temporal primacy of the Jew within the purposes of God ... and the absolute equality of status now granted to the non-Jew." Wright.

Ἕλληνα, Ἰουδαῖον m a Greek, non-Jew

Verse 17

δικαιοσύνη γὰρ θεοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ ἀποκαλύπτεται ἐκ πίστεως εἰς πίστιν, καθὼς γέγραπται· Ὁ δὲ δίκαιος ἐκ πίστεως ζήσεται.

δικαιοσυνη, ης f righteousness, what is right

It is a frequent theme in the OT that in saving or delivering his people, God manifests his righteousness (see Is 45:21; 51:5; Ps 24:5; 31:1; 98:2; 143:11).

The NIV translates 'righteousness from God,' reflecting the view championed by the Reformation that Paul is speaking of a righteousness which God gives to his people. A growing number of modern scholars argue that the sense is of God manifesting righteousness in 'putting to right' what has gone wrong in creation. Several commentators also stress the link between the righteousness of God and his covenant faithfulness (e.g. Ps 31:1).

Moo suggests that the verb 'reveal' favours the latter interpretation while the fact that righteousness is based on faith reflects the former. He suggests "Perhaps the most important consideration, however, is the use of the language 'righteousness of God' in the Old Testament. Here we find that key prophetic texts use this phrase to denote God's eschatological saving activity." Having cited particularly Is 46:13 and 51:5-8 Moo concludes, "'Righteousness' here denotes God's saving activity, in which he upholds what is 'right' by vindicating his people and delivering them from their distress... The prophecy of Isaiah, particularly chapters 40-66, exerted an enormous influence on Paul and the New Testament. Thus, Paul's readers would naturally have 'heard' in Paul's announcement in 1:17 the claim that the eschatological intervention of God to save his people has occurred."

Wright similarly comments, "In the gospel, God's righteousness is unveiled. This revelation happens, not just in the events referred to in the gospel, true though that is, but in the very announcement of the gospel. The death and resurrection of Jesus the Messiah form the initial disclosure of God's righteousness, the major apocalyptic event that burst upon an unsuspecting world and an uncomprehending Israel; now the apocalypse happens again, every time the message about Jesus is announced, as God's righteousness is unveiled before another audience."

"The gospel message about Jesus, in other words, opens people's eyes to see for the first time that *this was what God had been up to all along*. It enables Jews to see how the promises they had cherished had been fulfilled, quite otherwise than they expected. It enables Gentiles to see that there is one true God, the God of Israel, the creator; that this God has purposed to set the world to rights at last; and that this God has now in principle accomplished that purpose. And when we say 'enabled to see,' we should not think merely of propositions commanding mental assent. Paul believed that the announcement of the gospel wielded a power that overcame the unseen forces, inside people and around them, that prevented them from responding in obedient belief and allegiance (see 2 Cor 4:1-6)."

ἀποκαλύπτω reveal, disclose

Note the present tense

πιστις, εως f faith, trust, belief

'by faith from first to last' NIV and also Barrett. Barth argued that the phrase means from God's faithfulness to our believing in him. So also Wright who comments, "In the light of 3:21-22 and other passages, its most natural meaning is 'from God's faithfulness to human faithfulness.' When God's action in fulfilment of the covenant is unveiled, it is because God has been faithful to what has been promised; when it is received, it is received by that human faith that answers to the revelation of God in Jesus Christ, that human faith that is also *faithfulness* to the call of God in Jesus the Messiah."

γέγραπται Verb, perf pass indic, 3 s γραφω
δικαιος, α, ον righteous, just

ζήσεται Verb, fut mid indic, 3s ζω live

This phrase is ambiguous and may mean either, 'he who is justified by faith shall live', or 'the just man shall live by faith'. Lightfoot and Murray argue for the latter, which is more in line with Hab. 2:4, though Moo thinks the former is more in line with Paul's argument in Romans.

Wright comments, "The original passage in Habakkuk belongs within a book full of woe and puzzlement. The Chaldeans are marching against Israel; all seems lost. What is Israel's God up to in allowing it? This is, once more, the question of the righteousness, or justice, of God... By way of answer, the prophet is given a vision for the future, to be revealed at a later date (Hab 2:3). At the moment God's true people, the righteous within a sinful nation, 'will live by faith.' 'Faith' here, whether the human faith, as in the Hebrew text, or God's faithfulness, as in the LXX, is the key feature of the interim period.

"What does this mean in practice for the prophet? It means believing that God will eventually punish the idolatrous and violent nation (2:5-20), that God will remember mercy in the midst of wrath and bring salvation to Israel (3:2-19). This thematic parallel with Rom 1:18-3:20 and 3:21-4:25 is striking and continues to suggest that Paul does, indeed, have the larger context from Habakkuk in mind. Faced with pagan idolatry and arrogance, the devout first-century Jew longed for God's righteousness to break forth, bringing wrath on the nations and salvation for Israel. Paul, however, has seen God's purpose unveiled in the gospel and believes, like the prophet, that this vision is the key to understanding all that will now take place. This solution to the problem of first-century Israel produces a second-order problem: Much of ethnic Israel is failing to believe the gospel, while Gentiles are coming in in droves. Paul will deal with this in due course. For the moment he contents himself with the cryptic, but evocative quotation. He is not ashamed of the gospel, because it is God's power to salvation for all believers; because, faced with a world in idolatry and ruin, God's righteousness is revealed in the gospel, a matter of divine faithfulness reaching down and calling out the response of human faithfulness. In this setting, 'the righteous shall live by faithfulness'; whether divine or human or both, Paul does not need to say. The sentence remains cryptic until we reach 3:21-4:25."