

The Perfect Message

Romans 1:1-17

I. Paul Introduces Himself and God's Good News, the Perfect Message, 1:1-17

Though this first section of Romans is introductory we should not dismiss the content as trivial. Not only do we gain insight as to Paul's intentions and motivations for this letter, we are introduced to the grand theme of Romans, namely, the perfect message, the gospel of God's gracious salvation through Christ.

A. Paul Introduces Himself to the Christians in Rome directing their attention Christ and his mission to the nations 1:1-7.

The Text¹ with Grammatical Notes:

1:1 Paul, Christ Jesus' slave, called [as] an apostle, having been appointed^{pfpp^{tc}} for² God's gospel, **2** which He promised^{ami} beforehand through His prophets in [the] holy writings³, **3** concerning His Son, Who came about^{amptc} from David's seed according to the flesh⁴, **4** Who was appointed^{apptc} God's Son in power according to the spirit of holiness by means of⁵ [the] resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, **5** through Whom we received^{aai} grace and apostleship for the purpose of⁶ obedience of [which is] faith among all the nations⁷ for the sake of His name, **6** among whom you are^{pap^{tc}} also called of Jesus Christ; **7** to all who are in Rome, God's beloved, called [as] saints: grace to you and peace from God our Father and [the] Lord Jesus Christ.⁸

¹The Greek text used in this translation is the Nestle-Aland Greek New Testament, 28th edition. This translation is intentionally awkward attempting to capture some of the emphases from the original word order. The verbal tenses, moods, and forms are coded in the text (superscripts). Any construct of grammatical interest to me has been footnoted. I used the exercise of translating to further familiarize myself Romans and I added the translation into the notes for those interested. The English version cited in 'Observation From the Text' sections will be the New American Standard Bible 1995 edition unless otherwise noted.

² Purpose "for the purpose of," consider 1 Corinthians 9:16-18.

³ From Genesis 3:15 through Malachi 4:6 the Gospel that God would redeem mankind from the penalty, power, and presence of sin was promised, to Abrahamic Covenant, Genesis 12; 13; 15; 17; 22 in the Old Testament guaranteeing this Gospel which is now realized through the faith/faithfulness of Jesus Christ.

⁴ Consider 2 Samuel 7:12-16 and 1 Chronicles 17:11-15 with Matthew 1:1-16.

⁵The preposition is taken to signify means. The divine means of God's declaring Jesus to be the Heir/Son was the resurrection, consider Psalm 2:7 with Acts 13:33.

⁶ Indicates purpose "for the purpose of." This preposition may also indicate result "so that," "with the result that."

⁷ Paul begins and ends this letter with the same theme, consider 16:26. Also, Romans 11.

⁸ "Lord Jesus Christ" is understood to serve as the object of the preposition "from" along with God our Father. Hence, God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ are understood as the source of grace and peace.

Observations From the Text:

V1 PAUL, A BOND-SERVANT OF CHRIST JESUS—As for information regarding PAUL see the introduction. The concept of being a BOND-SERVANT, while familiar in Paul's letters, was uncertain in the first century. In the Romans setting there were those who were 1) servants voluntarily; 2) servants through Roman conquest; and 3) temporary indentured servants. In some studies there are those who would understand the notion of the BOND-SERVANT as mentioned in Deuteronomy 15:12-18, though this is unlikely as there is little correlation for servanthood in Deuteronomy and the New Testament allegiance to Christ. It is more likely that idea of servitude should be understood as being at the heart of one's relationship to God redemption and spiritual life. The Old Testament accorded the title servant of YHWH to Moses, Joshua, and David as an honor, see Joshua 14:7; Judges 2:8; Psalm 89:3. In the New Testament Jesus the Son became a servant through His incarnation, Philippians 2:7 *doulos*; behaved as a servant, Mark 10:45 *diakoneo* used in context with *doulos*; John 13:1-16 v16 *doulos*; and trained His followers to be servants, Luke 22:24-27 *diakonos*. Servitude, then, is at the heart of redemptive love, 15:8; Philippians 2:7, which is the Messiah's Law, John 13:34-35, consider Galatians 5:13.⁹

VV1-4 CALLED as AN APOSTLE SET APART FOR THE GOSPEL OF GOD – The word apostle is the noun form of the verb “to send” and the sending is usually with a special commission. Paul's particular commission was the proclamation of God's GOSPEL/ good news about salvation. The term “apostle(s)” is used in the NT referring to the Twelve (less Judas Iscariot), 1 Corinthians 15:5, to a group of specific individuals with specific commissions, Philippians 2:25 (translated “messenger” in NAS20), or to Paul, 1 Corinthians 15:8-9.

VV 2-5 describe the historical roots and reality of God's gospel. 1) The gospel was promised in the OT (e.g., Genesis 3:15; 12:3; Isaiah 7:14; 11:1—12:6; 53; Jeremiah 31:31). 2) The gospel concerns Jesus, who is David's descendant, cp. 2 Samuel 7:12, and 3) Jesus, David's descendant, is God's Son, a title reflective of the human-divine relationship Jesus had with God the Father. The GOSPEL OF GOD (v1) is the subject of this entire epistle.

V4 DECLARED THE SON OF GOD WITH POWER BY THE RESURRECTION FROM THE DEAD—Through the incarnation God the Son became the Son of God, consider Luke 1:35. As a human being, Jesus lived in perfect filial relationship with God, the Father, consider John 8:29; Matthew 17:5. The Son's unblemished faith/faithfulness toward the Father was ultimately confirmed/DECLARED... BY THE RESURRECTION, cp. Psalm 2:7 with Acts 13:33f.. The resurrection of Christ serves as the divine act of appointing Jesus as Son/heir (Heir to the Davidic throne, Acts 2:30ff.¹⁰) and High Priest over the New Covenant. Elsewhere in Paul's letters Jesus is referred to

⁹The verb “serve” in Galatians 5:13 is *douleuete* the same root as the noun translated “bond-servant.”

¹⁰In the first century many cultures practiced an initiation rite (legal adoption rite) whereby a child would be declared to have adult status and would be recognized as the heir to the family's wealth. Roman culture: Between

as “the firstborn (highest rank) from the dead,” Colossians 1:18, further signifying the resurrection as the divine act by which the God the Father acknowledged Jesus’ status as primary heir to God’s kingdom, consider Colossians 1:13.

V5 TO BRING ABOUT the OBEDIENCE OF FAITH – The purpose of Paul’s apostleship was to lead others to obey God’s call/invitation to believe in Christ. While some would understand “obedience of faith” as the subject-genitive serving as the action of the noun (faith’s obedience), that is, the obedient lifestyle that faith produces, I prefer OF FAITH to be appositional, namely, that the obedience is the faith-response God requires, cp. John 6:28-29. Consider that throughout Romans, our response in faith represents the singular condition for our justification, 3:21–4:5.

V5 AMONG ALL THE GENTILES – At the beginning (and end) of this letter Paul mentions his specific mission to the nations (GENTILES), consider 15:15-16. Further, Paul provides his insight regarding the Gospel, the promises, and the nations, Romans 4:9ff.; 9–11. Since Jesus’ ascent to the position of divine authority, Matthew 28:18, His followers have been instructed to make disciples of all nations, Matthew 28:19. God is now regathering the nations, scattered at Babel, Genesis 11, adding the Gentiles as beneficiaries to the promises made to Abraham, consider Romans 11:25 with Ephesians 2:11-21. As will be discussed later (ch. 4), the Abrahamic Covenant was designed to bring salvation to all the nations, Genesis 12:3; 22:18; also, Galatians 3:7-9. The theme, salvation to the Gentiles/nations serves as the focus of Romans 9-11, as well as the basis for Paul’s concluding exhortation for mutual love between Jews and Gentiles, 15:7-13.

V7 TO ALL WHO ARE BELOVED OF GOD IN ROME – (see introduction pp. 7-10). Those who believe have been singled out by God and have been bestowed with God’s favor/grace. Those who follow Christ are LOVED BY GOD. We are His workmanship, Ephesians 2:10. Believers in Christ are SAINTS/holy ones. This status is not earned it is gifted.

V7 GRACE...AND PEACE – More than a friendly greeting, blessing the church with GRACE and PEACE reminds these Christians about divine energy/enablement and the ultimate objective of salvation, 8:6. Grace functions as the divine operative impulse for spiritual life, 6:14; peace is the result of grace (reconciliation) and epitomizes the relationship Christians have with God, 5:11,

the ages of 14-17 the son was legally recognized as heir and granted full Roman citizenship. Certain Roman ceremonies had the boys offer their toys as a sacrifice to the gods while the girls would offer their dolls (cp. 1 Corinthians 13). Greek Culture: at the age of 18 boys would go through a ceremony at the festival called *apatouria* in which the boy’s hair would be cut off and offered to Apollo. Jewish Culture: the bar mitzvah took place on the first Sabbath after the twelfth birthday. The boy would pray, “O my God and God of my father, on this solemn and sacred day which marks my passage from boyhood to manhood, I humbly raise my eyes unto You and declare with sincerity and truth that henceforth I will keep Your commandments and undertake to bear the responsibility of my actions toward You.”

with each other, Ephesians 4:3, and depicts the entire scope of blessing inherent in salvation (*shalom*), cp. Romans 5:1; consider Romans 10:15 w. Isaiah 52:7—53:12.

Summarizing the Text

Paul greets the faithful assembly who are meeting in various homes in Rome identifying himself, his commission, that of an apostle; his mission, proclaiming Christ to the nations; and, Jesus, object of faith, who is both the son of David and Son of God.

B. Paul introduces his desire to and the possibility of visiting Rome, 1:8-15.

The Text with Grammatical Notes

8 First, I give thanks^{pai} to my God through Jesus Christ concerning all of you, because your faith is being announced^{ppi} in the whole world. **9** For God is^{pai} my witness, Whom I am serving^{pai} in my spirit in the gospel of His Son, as I ceaselessly make^{pmi} mention of you **10** always in my prayers, while requesting^{pmptc}, if somehow, now at last, I will be successful,^{fpi} by God's will, to come^{aainf} to you. **11** For I am longing^{pai} to see^{aainf} you, so that I might impart^{aasubj} some gift¹¹ with you pertaining to the spirit, so that you be established^{apinf}. **12** And it [i.e., the gift] is^{pai} this, to be mutually encouraged^{apinf} among you through one another's faith, both yours and mine. **13** Now I do not wish^{pai} you to be ignorant^{painf}, fellow Christians¹³, that I frequently planned^{ami} to come^{aainf} to you, and was prevented^{api} until now, so that I might have^{aasubj} some fruit among you, just as also among the rest of the nations. **14** To both the Greeks and barbarians, both to the wise and unintelligent I am^{pai} a debtor, **15** so, according to my readiness also to you in Rome to proclaim^{aminf} the gospel.¹⁴

Observations From the Text

V8 Paul expresses of gratitude because the faith exhibited by the Roman Christians is being reported around the Empire.

VV 9-12 Paul's prayer for the Roman Christians continues with the purpose that he might get to Rome to encourage their faith in Christ.

¹¹Literally "a grace-gift to you which is spiritual" the *-tikos* ending signifies the idea "pertaining to" hence, "pertaining to the spirit grace-gift." Adjectives with *-inos* endings signify "made of..." Romans 7:14 presents an interesting use of these endings side-by-side. "The Law is spiritual (*-ikos* pertains to the spirit), but I am fleshly (*-inos* made of flesh). See also 1 Corinthians 3:1 "I was not able to speak to you as to spiritual (*-ikois* i.e., pertaining to) but as fleshly (*-inois* – made of).

¹²"so that you might be established" εἰς το + infinitive... This construct indicates a purpose. Paul's purpose in giving to them a grace-gift was that the Roman Christians might be established/strengthened/confirmed.

¹³The Greek word is "brothers" but when it refers to everyone assembled the phrase "fellow Christian(s)" will be used, thus including everyone in the assembly.

¹⁴While vv14-15 represent awkward/poor English, the word order was preserved to capture Paul's emphasis and urgency. The NASB95 reads, "I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. So, for my part, I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome."

V11 THAT YOU MAY BE ESTABLISHED – The grammar used here, THAT, often indicates “purpose.” Paul’s purpose in visiting Rome is to “strengthen,” “make firm,” or “establish” these Christians in the faith. The occasion behind this letter is to make the Roman Christians aware of Paul’s intentions to visit, cp. also 15:22-29, while grounding the church further in the faith. As we will see, however, Paul’s letter to the Romans becomes Paul’s greatest singular theological explanation of the Christian faith.

VV13-15 Paul’s passion and obligation (debt) is to proclaim the gospel AMONG THE REST OF THE GENTILES/nations, V14, regardless of their cultural status (i.e., GREEKS = cultured Gentiles; BARBARIANS = uncultured Gentiles; WISE = refined, trained; FOOLISH = literally ‘without mind/thought’).

V15 THE GOSPEL – So much more than “believe and be saved,” the good news (gospel) involves the whole counsel and outworking of God’s redemptive plan according to the Abrahamic promise (which, as we will see, is the entire message of Romans). This redemptive plan is the offer of the gift of redemption, righteousness, reconciliation, with the guarantee of eternal life for any person living helplessly under Adam’s death sentence. All this grace, apart from any ability of ours to keep God’s law, is gifted to anyone, Jew or Gentile, who believes God’s promise for life through Christ. This gift is possible because of the faith/faithfulness/obedience of Jesus 3:21-24; 5:19-21. The believer is declared the beneficiary of Christ’s faith and faithful obedience to the Father. And, because of being co-heir with Christ, will enjoy the reign of grace through Christ’s righteousness to eternal life, 5:21. This is the good news, the GOSPEL, God’s perfect message.

Summarizing the Text

Emphasizing his passion and obligation (debt), Paul informs the Roman Christians about his intentions to visit Rome so that he might encourage (i.e., impart some spiritual gift/ instruction) the believers meeting together in Rome.

C. Paul introduces the gospel, God’s Perfect Message, 1:16-17.

The Text with Grammatical Notes

16 For I am not ashamed^{pmi} of the gospel, for [the Gospel]¹⁵ is^{pai} God’s power¹⁶ unto¹⁷ salvation to all who believe^{paptc}, to Jew first and also Greek. **17** For God’s righteousness in the

¹⁵Greek text does not repeat *euaggelion*, rather has *estin* (3ps *eimi*).

¹⁶The original text places power, *dunamis* first for emphasis, thus would read “God’s power it is unto salvation...”.

¹⁷*eis* + acc. Can indicate purpose/ motion toward.

gospel¹⁸ is being revealed^{ppi} from faith to faith¹⁹, just as it has been written^{pfpi}, **“and the righteous one from faith will live^{fmi}.”**²⁰

Observations From the Text

V16 FOR I AM NOT ASHAMED OF THE GOSPEL – The word FOR introduces Paul’s explanation regarding his eagerness to preach the gospel in Rome. Paul’s eagerness to proclaim Christ is linked to his confidence in God’s perfect message. THE GOSPEL, the word gospel means ‘good news’ focuses on Christ. Because of God’s purposes realized through Christ, Paul is convinced that proclaiming and/or believing this message cannot bring or be a cause to be ASHAMED/disappointed. The gospel will never disappoint. God’s covenantal promise, the coming of Christ, Christ’s life of faith and obedience, and the divine affirmation through the resurrection are historically certain. THE GOSPEL reality stands as the object of Paul confidence. Other belief systems disappoint/embarrass/make a person ashamed. Other belief systems depend upon the flesh, namely, our human abilities to achieve God’s purposes. The gospel does not.

V16 FOR IT IS THE POWER OF GOD – Furthermore, the reason, FOR, Paul is not ashamed about the gospel is that this message, the gospel, serves as the vehicle by which God demonstrates THE POWER of life from the dead. The gospel, IT, is the demonstration and proclamation of God’s power bringing about the new creation, to be specific the final Adam and a redeemed humanity transformed into and fit for a new creation. This power was demonstrated through at least three realities. First, God’s power was demonstrated in historical/factual reality. The message is not fantasy. By God’s power Jesus lived, died, and was bodily raised from the dead. Second, the proclamation of these historical facts unleashes God’s power to move those who hear to faith, 10:17. God’s Word about the living Son enlivened by the Holy Spirit moves/draws the unregenerate to faith. Those who respond in faith are made alive from the dead, consider 1 Peter 1:23. As God’s providential grace draws a person to Christ, the Spirit convicts the about sin, righteousness, and judgment, resulting in a change of mind (repentance) and a new focus of trust, believing the gospel. Third and finally, the gospel continues to transform the believer. The living Savior becomes, by the Spirit, the life Giver of those born again. Christ in you, through you, as you, Galatians 2:20, is the power of the resurrection, Philippians 3:10, see also 2 Corinthians 4:7-12, 16-18. Christ’s righteousness is the righteousness transforming the follower of Christ, this progressive Christlikeness and final glorification, is the objective of the gospel, 8:30, the message that will not fail, the message that will not disappoint, 5:5.²¹

¹⁸The Gk text has *en auto*. The antecedent is *euaggelion* from v16.

¹⁹From faith unto faith... *ek/eis*. I like to think that these two prepositions are more than stylistic changes. I take these prepositions to describe the basis for and the direction of faith. See discussion in verse seventeen.

²⁰ Habakkuk 2:4

²¹The Greek word translated “ashamed” 1:16 and the word translated “disappoint,” 5:5 are from the same root αἰσχύνομαι.

V16 FOR SALVATION – Salvation will be discussed at length below. For now, we can say that SALVATION is God’s power rescuing the believer through the proclamation of the resurrected Christ. This power recreates those who turn to Christ in trust/faith rescuing them from the penalty, practice, and presence of sin and death, while also qualifying and preparing these believers for the coming messianic kingdom at Christ’s return, 4:13; 7:4-6; 8:18-25.

V16 TO EVERYONE WHO BELIEVES – Qualifying for this powerfully transformative deliverance requires only a response of faith. This salvation faith (belief), in Paul’s understanding, is the conviction that what God has said is fact/true/correct/and right, consider Romans 4:21.²² Those who, like Abraham, 4:1-6, believe God’s promissory message about His Son, are acquitted and recreated. This message of salvation by faith has now come to all. Paul tells us that the gospel is TO THE JEW FIRST AND ALSO TO THE GREEK. TO THE JEW FIRST refers to Israel’s place in salvation history. Israel was miraculously created by God, 4:18-20, to be the recipient of and source for the promises regarding salvation, Romans 3:2; 9:4-5. As an Israelite who understood that the Jew was the immediate object of God’s promise and law/revelation, it is understandable that Paul usually taught God’s message to the Jews before preaching to the nations, see Acts 13:5,14, 44-46. This Jewish spiritual priority/privilege seems to be packed into 3:1-2; 9:4-5; and 15:27. Yet as God’s program moved to include “many nations,” 4:18; Matthew 28:19, Paul’s ministry also included the Gentiles (THE GREEK).

V17 FOR – Again, the word FOR introduces a second reason for Paul’s eagerness to preach the gospel. Through the gospel, IN IT, God’s living word, the RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD IS REVEALED/unveiled. In the past God’s righteousness was revealed through the Law. Now, through Christ, God demonstrates righteousness in a person, Jesus. Christ’s is God’s demonstration of power over death granting new life. It is through Christ, the living ‘good news,’ that God’s reveals His righteousness. This ‘unveiling’ of God’s righteousness occurs at several levels. First, because God’s righteousness represents and requires justice,²³ the human sin and its attending consequences needed a just compensation. God’s righteousness was unveiled through the gospel because Christ’s substitutionary death provided the just compensation regarding Adam’s sin, consider 1 Peter 3:18; also Romans 5:12-21. God’s standards of righteousness were not compromised while rescuing humanity from sin and death. Second God’s righteousness was unveiled through the faith and obedience of one man, Jesus. Adam’s life failed the righteous standards God set forth, 5:12. Even under the Law, a reflection of God’s righteousness, 7:12, Adam’s sin prevailed, 3:9, 19-20. So, while the law reflected God’s righteousness, our efforts to

²²There are many other factors regarding faith and our response(s). At this juncture I am simply discussing the nature of faith/belief/conviction. The changes wrought by God through our faith response such as subsequent regeneration and the activity of God’s grace through the Holy Spirit, etc. must be taken into consideration. I do not, however, confuse those influences with the lexical notion of “faith.”

²³ The Greek word for righteousness has, as its primary meaning “fairness, justice,” BDAG s.v. δικαιοσύνη.

comply failed, but Christ's life embodied it. Under Law the Son lived without sin. Jesus, the Son of God, lived the faith-life required by God. The gospel, embodied in the Son, is the new "torah/teaching/revelation" of God's righteousness. As the Mosaic Law revealed a shadow of God's righteousness, Christ and the good news about Christ, reveals the living reality of God's righteousness. Third, as the gospel demonstrates God's righteousness through judgment against sin, and as the life of righteousness lived (Christ's faithfulness), so God is now just/ righteous to acquit those who turn to Christ, 3:26. Having publicly displayed Christ as the place of propitiation, God righteously acquits/justifies all who have turned to Christ in faith whether by looking forward to the promise of eternal life (prior to Christ's death and resurrection) or, as today, looking back upon what God has accomplished through Christ, 3:25-26. What the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, 8:3, God did, sending His Son in the likeness of sinful flesh. The gospel demonstrates God's righteousness through the life of a person. God's righteousness, however, not only reveals itself through Christ's life and death, 3:26, God's righteousness is unveiled through Christ resurrected life as God's redemptive plan unfolds, Romans 9—11; Ephesians 1:3—2:22. Christ, because of His redemptive obedience, 5:19b, serves as the mediating agent of eternal life to all who believe, 5:21. Now God's righteousness is revealed and available, demonstrating itself, apart from our ability to keep the Law, 3:21-22, through Christ living through the course of the lives of His people, 8:28-30; 9:1—11:36. For Paul, the revelation of, the reality of, and availability of this righteousness is the gospel.

V17 IS REVEALED—The gospel REVEALED a righteousness that unexpected. Unexpected, in that God's righteousness understood and experienced apart from works of the Law. The righteousness of God that overcame the sin and death incurred through Adam; the righteousness of God condemning sin in the flesh through the obedience of the Son; this righteousness now demonstrates itself through Christ by the Spirit on behalf of Adam's helpless race.

V17 FROM FAITH – This righteous demonstration mentioned above takes place FROM FAITH TO FAITH. The preposition FROM has a general emphasis indicating source, i.e., "from."²⁴ Given the argument of Romans and the central message about the obedient Son, Paul points forward to the source of God's communicated righteousness, namely, Jesus. Paul will tell us that apart from the Law God's righteousness is revealed through the faith/fidelity of Jesus Christ, 3:21-22. The source of God's righteousness is not "from" our best efforts or our faith. The revealed source of God's righteousness for salvation is FROM the FAITH/fidelity of the obedient Son. His FAITH is the source of faith and His fidelity (a second possible meaning for the same Greek word) is God's righteousness communicated to all who believe.²⁵

²⁴See Wallace, *Beyond the Basics*, 371.

²⁵Regarding Christ's sinless life (*non potuit peccare*) I do not separate the ideas that Christ lived by faith in His Father's will and that this faith enlivened fidelity. The phrase *dia pisteos Iesou Christou* in Romans 3:22 is taken to indicate that Christ revealed God's righteousness both in His unwavering faith/trust and in the ensuing

V17 TO FAITH – All who believe is represented by the preposition TO FAITH. What Paul tells us here is that God’s righteousness is received and realized in the life of the believer who is rescued from the source of the faith/faithfulness of Christ. The revelation of God’s righteousness apart from the law is found in Christ (from faith). Those who receive Christ’s imputed righteousness are those who express faith in the message. God’s righteousness is revealed from the faith/faithfulness of Christ TO the FAITH of those trusting God’s message, the gospel.

V17 – AS IT IS WRITTEN; BUT THE RIGHTEOUS man SHALL LIVE BY FAITH— To substantiate his declaration of communicated righteousness, Paul cites Habakkuk 2:4. In the NT this passage is used three times, twice by Paul, here and Galatians 3:11, and once by the author of Hebrews, 10:38. In Hebrews 10:38 the emphasis seems to be the necessity of faithful perseverance through difficulties. Galatians 3:11, however, compares works of the Law with faith and uses the Habakkuk citation to emphasize faith as the principle by which a person relates to God. Interestingly, in looking at Habakkuk 2:4 we notice that the text uses a Hebrew word most often stressing “faithfulness.”²⁶ Additionally, the pronominal suffix translated “his” (see footnote twenty-six below), may either refer to the righteous person or the One who is providing the vision and doing the talking, namely the LORD. As possible further insight about to which of these antecedents “his” references, the LXX includes the pronoun “my” so that the passage reads, “but the righteous one from My faith/faithfulness shall live.” This addition, while not included in the Romans citation, insists that the faithfulness by which the righteous person lives is in the faithfulness of God. Paul’s intention, in citing Habakkuk 2:4, quite possibly moves the reader forward to Romans 3:22. The faith/faithfulness upon which the righteous person trusts is that of Christ Jesus. The gospel revealing the righteousness of God apart from Law, is the message about the obedient Son whose faith/faithfulness is the life upon the believer depends (and lives). Christ’s faith/faithfulness is gifted to those who believe God’s message, thus, revealing God’s righteousness through the lives of those recreated by God’s saving power.

Summarizing the Text

Paul would gladly proclaim Christ in Rome because he is not embarrassed by the gospel (the good news about Christ), since he knows that 1) historically what God did through Christ is the fact of God’s power over sin and death; 2) what the message represents is the proclamation

faithful life lived. While this connection is true of the Son this connection between faith and faithfulness is not always true of the believer due to the presence of indwelling sin, 7:16-17. Thus, Christ’s life of faith and faithfulness is the revelation and source of our faith and righteousness. We will take a closer look at the phrase *dia pisteos Iesou Christou* in chapter three.

²⁶ Habakkuk 2:4 employs the word *אֱמֻנָה* which, according to BDB emphasizes steadiness, faithfulness, steadfastness, and trust (as a human characteristic). Furthermore, the pronominal suffix in the text translated “his” may refer to the human agent (the righteous one) or the One who is doing the talking, which in this context is YHWH (2:2ff.). Interestingly, the LXX translators, in seeking to add clarity to the Hebrew meaning added the word “my” indentifying the faith as that of the Speaker, namely God. Hence “The righteous person shall live by My Faithfulness.”

of God's power for salvation; and, 3) what God does through the proclamation of this message is demonstrate His righteous power through Christ, the obedient Son, to those who believe.

Taking a Closer Look

SALVATION

Because "salvation" represents a theological theme of great importance, a closer look will be detailed. First, we will give a quick overview from the biblical record and then we will define salvation from the letter to the Romans.

A. Defining Salvation from the Bible

1. Old Testament words and concepts generally used to communicate the idea of salvation

The various Hebrew word groups such as *yasha'*; *natzal*; *palat*; *padah*; *ga'al*; and *shalom*, along with the various Greek word groups in the Septuagint, *Sodzein*, *Exairein*, and *Ruomai*, are used to relate the foundational ideas embedded in the concept of salvation. Words in these groups communicate divine acts of deliverance, Exodus 15:2; victory over or escape from enemies, 1 Samuel 11:13; healing and deliverance, Psalm 30:3; concepts of peace and well-being, Isaiah 52:7,10; all that pertains to life and blessing, Psalm 24:5; details concerning the Davidic covenant, 2 Samuel 23:5; 21:1,5; details involving the physical regathering of Israel at the return of the Lord, Psalm 14:7; 53:6; 69:34f.; 85; 106:4; Isaiah 12; 25:9; 26:1; 45:17; 46:13,²⁷ Zechariah 12:6-9; Ezekiel 36:22-30; Isaiah 11:10—12:6; concepts of restoration and revitalization, Psalm 80:1-3ff; Psalm 96:1-13; Isaiah 51:5; 52:10; 56:1; 61:10,11; future hope due to personal obedience, Psalm 119:166,174; the removal of sin, Psalm 51:14; 79:9; and the reward of the faithful including their restoration, Deuteronomy 30:1-14; Isaiah 62:11.

2. New Testament words and concepts generally used to communicate ideas about salvation.

The Greek NT, likewise, employs several word groups to convey ideas associated with Salvation. In the NT we find the *sōdzein* word group, the *exaireō* word group; the *ruomai* word group, the *aphesis* word group. These groups of words speak of salvation in terms of deliverance from danger and death, Matthew 14:30; from disease, Matthew 9:22a; from sin, Romans 10:9; and wrath, 1 Thessalonians 5:9. Additionally, they relate salvation to one's eternal inheritance, Hebrews 1:14; and, the coming of the Lord, Romans 13:11. Salvation is also connected to ideas such as "set free, rescue, select, and, to choose" Acts 7:34; 23:27; 26:17; Galatian 1:4. Finally, some of these words emphasize release, Luke 4:18, and forgiveness, Ephesians 1:7. While the NT includes themes of deliverance, safety, and well-being prevalent in the OT, the NT stresses the spiritual aspects we often associate with salvation such as regeneration and righteousness, Titus 3:5-7, or deliverance from the consequences of sin and death Romans 5:9,10, and eternal life, Romans 5:21. Salvation in the NT is deliverance from spiritual divine wrath, 1 Thessalonians 5:9, leading to and involving the ideas of future glory, honor, prosperity, and inheritance associated with the coming messianic kingdom, Matthew 19:27-30; Acts 3:17-26; 28:23-31; Romans 2:6-7; 10:10; 13:11; Philippians 1:19, 28; 2:12; 1 Thessalonians 5:9; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Timothy 2:10; Titus 2:11-13; Hebrews 1:14; 9:28; 1 Peter 1:5,9-10. Thus, salvation, in both the New Testament may reference the future sum of benefits and blessings which the believer, redeemed from all earthly ills, will enjoy after the visible return of Christ in the coming kingdom of God.

Summary:

Salvation, with regards to God's delivering humanity from sin and death, refers to God's entire plan for rescuing mankind/creation from sin's penalties, power, and presence (which includes all disease and corruption) while

²⁷The second largest grouping in the use of "salvation" directly relates to the final restoration of Israel, the restoration of the earth along with Gentile nations, and the inheritance of God's obedient people at the return of the Lord to earth.

including an eternal re-creation and glory for all creation as guaranteed through the promise-grant covenants made to Abraham, David, and the nation Israel on behalf of all and inaugurated by God through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

B. Defining Salvation from the Letter to the Romans

While certain passage in Romans use words specifically translated “salvation, 1:16” and/or “saved,” 5:9, it should be said that the entire argument of Romans lends itself to define what Paul understood and meant by ‘salvation.’ For example, salvation is introduced without explanation in 1:16. Yet this introduction is immediately connected with the content beginning in 1:18 by the explanatory particle FOR. It is here that Paul begins the content of his letter attaching “salvation,” to his discussion about the idolatry, suppression of truth, sexual failings, and utter lawlessness of humanity, and God’s righteous judgment against mankind, 1:18—3:20.

To understand ‘salvation’ in Romans we must begin with humanity’s rejection of the one true God and God’s inevitable judgment/wrath warranted by this rejection. Throughout this letter Paul understands salvation, at its inception, as the deliverance from God’s eternal and righteous wrath, 5:9. Paul makes it clear that all humanity is deserving of and headed for God’s judgment which involves God’s eternal, righteous wrath, 2:8-9; 3:9, 19-20. Salvation, then, involves deliverance.

As the letter moves forward, however, Paul locates this deliverance, not on one’s ability to please God by keeping His law, but, rather, quite the opposite. Salvation comes from God. Salvation, for Paul involves the righteousness of another who has been given over as the place of propitiation (appeasement) to endure and so satisfy God’s righteous judgment allowing God to righteously to acquit the guilty, 3:24-26 remove the enmity, 5:10, and receive salvation/eternal life through the Son, 5:19-20. This demonstration of God’s grace is through righteousness apart from the Law, 3:21. This imputed/gifted righteousness is the faith/faithfulness of Jesus Christ, 3:22.

Salvation in Romans, however, takes us behind the scenes of the acquittal of the individual. Paul tells us that the obedience of Christ removes not only our transgressions against God’s Law, but ultimately reverses the consequences of Adam’s sin, 5:12-21. United with the obedient Son, the believer has been crucified to the law (and the power of sin to kill) while simultaneously united with Christ’s resurrected life. This union with Christ delivers from the jurisdiction of the law, strips sin of its power to kill and places the believer under the authority of a new operating system, grace, 6:14. This new position, ‘under grace’, provides a new dimension to salvation, a dimension that enables the Christian, by the Spirit to please God, 7:4-6. Through Christ, the recreated recipient of Christ’s life has had the removal of the body of Adam’s curse, 7:24-25. The acquitted faces no condemnation, 8:1, and has the Spirit of Life in Christ, 8:2, the Spirit of adoption, 8:15, who not only qualifies the believer to share in the glories of the risen Savior, but Who enlivens this new man to fulfill the righteousness of God’s Law, 8:4 (13:8). Salvation in Romans presents us with an unexpected vista. Salvation in Romans chapters one through eight gives us a view of God’s grace, Jesus Christ, and the new creation of the restored humanity and creation, 8:18-25. This renewal has already begun, but it is not yet here.

Romans does not stop with the individual. Salvation in Romans includes the restoration of the nations which were scattered at Babel. The people who were not God’s people, the Gentiles, are now, through God’s wisdom and intervention, turning to Christ, 9:25-30; 11:32. Salvation in Romans includes the fullness of the Gentiles grafted on to the root, God’s covenant with Abraham, 4:9-25; 11:25-33. This salvation of the believing individual is part of a grand plan to bless the nations, Genesis 12:3, under the grace of the Messiah, so that, when finished the nations, of which Israel is chief, will dwell on the earth in the fullness of resurrection renewal and worldwide, restorative peace, 15:7-13. As was promised through Abraham, Genesis 12:1-3 and witnessed by the law and the prophets, Deuteronomy 32:43; Isaiah 11:10, for Paul, God’s salvation depicted in Romans is complete in Christ, involves the makeover of all creation and is nearer now than when we first believed, 13:11.

The Perfect Message

In our day, as in Paul's day, the world needs a real-time, real-life message of hope. The Chaos of corruption, the futility of reform, and the inevitability of death join forces to dissuade even the most stout-hearted. What we need is real-live good news. Romans introduces us to this good news.

The human tragedy begins with our alienation from God, our creator. This alienation began at conception and expresses itself through every thought, intention, and act of self-preservation, through basically, everything we do. The good news, the gospel, addresses this alienation.

The gospel addresses our personal sin and inevitable corruption. The good news is that God has, apart from our efforts and abilities, provided the righteousness He requires for a relationship with us. Our sins have been paid for, and full acquittal (justification) is available. Perfect! No sentence of death. No need to perform impossible rules and regulations. Just take God at His word with the confidence that sin and death have been dealt with, forever.

The wrath forecast for humanity can be avoided. Salvation "saves" us from the wrath of God's justice. The gospel message includes God's wrath executing a substitute. Jesus, God's mercy seat, stood in our place. He is the only human being who ever lived with God in perfect obedience and fellowship but He, in obedience to His faith in God, took our punishment.

The gospel provides a new life. Not a life of our attempts to measure up to God's standard, but a life that expresses the presence of the resurrected life of Christ, the only One who can accomplish God's will. Perfect!

Finally, the gospel projects the reign of grace over all creation with the redeemed from every nation living together under the care of the Messianic King, Jesus. Perfect!

God's perfect message of hope, addressing the corruption of sin and death, the need for grace through the course of this life, and life in a new creation, a new humanity, forever. The Christian life begins with and rests upon this message. To attempt to reach and live for God apart from the gospel is, in a word, hopeless.