

Romans 1:16-17 (NKJV)
Rom 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.
Rom 1:17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, *"The just shall live by faith."*

1

Two Common Misconceptions About Romans

1. The book of Romans is heavily theological and, therefore, boring
 - When Paul's overall purpose for writing Romans is understood, the book becomes practical and applicable to everyday living
2. Romans is a book about initial salvation (regeneration)
 - Romans is NOT written to unbelievers, telling them how to be saved; it is written to believers, telling them how to be sanctified

2

The so-called
"ROMANS ROAD TO SALVATION"
which is the approach of many
gospel tracts and presentations,
MISUSES
several of the verses taken from Romans

3

- John Niemela, Professor at Rocky Mountain Bible College, graduate of Dallas Theological Seminary, and former student and friend of the late Zane Hodges, said of Romans:
"This book focuses on issues concerning believers, a fact overlooked by those who use the so-called Romans Road to inform unbelievers of the importance of believing in Christ. Paul would be shocked to learn that his message for believers would be construed as a message for unbelievers ... Contrary to what advocates of the so-called Romans Road would say, his epistle was not designed as an evangelistic tool."

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1. The Problem With the Church at Rome

- In typical eastern style, Paul does not begin with the problem
- Instead, he takes a more diplomatic approach so that his audience doesn't lose face, which is very important in the Middle Eastern and Mediterranean world of Paul's day
- He drops a few hints in ch. 1 that there could be a problem, but he skips over the NATURE of the problem and goes right to the SOLUTION to the problem

5

- Because we have western minds, we want to see the nature of the problem up front
- In ch. 15 (near the end of the book) Paul finally lays out the problem – "the elephant in the room," so to speak – for which he has already provided the solution in the preceding chapters

Rom 15:5-6 Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be like-minded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus, that you may with one mind and one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

6

Rom 15:7 Therefore receive one another, just as Christ also received us, to the glory of God.

8-9 Now I say that Jesus Christ has become a servant to the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made to the fathers, and that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy, as it is written: "For this reason I will confess to You among the Gentiles, and sing to Your name."

10 And again he says: "Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people!"

7

Rom 15:11 And again: "Praise the LORD, all you Gentiles! Laud Him, all you peoples!"

12 And again, Isaiah says: "There shall be a root of Jesse; and He who shall rise to reign over the Gentiles, in Him the Gentiles shall hope."

- The believers at Rome are NOT like-minded; they are NOT of one accord; they are NOT unified
- **16:17** points out that this lack of unity has led to divisions and offenses, which is contrary to the Scriptures

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What are the ramifications of their disunity and divisions?

A) 15:6-7 – They are not glorifying God

B) 15-8-12 – Messiah's kingdom objectives are not being fulfilled

- In other words, because of the disunity and divisions in Rome, the Gentiles in other parts of the world are not being reached with either the gospel of grace unto initial salvation or the gospel of soul-salvation unto kingdom inheritance

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- Thus, implied in this problem is that the ultimate goal of bringing many sons to glory (to use a term from Heb. 2:10) is not being accomplished

- v. 12b, "In Him the Gentiles shall hope."
- **HOPE** is a kingdom inheritance term – the confident expectation, along with an attitude of pleasure or delight, that we will be rewarded by Jesus if we are living righteously
- Paul uses *hope* 12X in the book of Romans

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- When Gentiles are being reached for the glory of God with the kingdom inheritance message, then the Holy Spirit is bringing many sons to glory who have HOPE in the coming kingdom of Christ
- They will be rewarded with the privilege of co-ruling with Him as His bride in the kingdom
- Because of the disunity and divisions in Rome, that is not happening – the Gentiles are NOT being reached

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Could it be that because of disunity and division **WITHIN** Christian churches today – not to mention **AMONGST** churches – the goal of reaching Gentiles and sons to glory is not being accomplished?

12

How can churches put an end to disunity and division?

- a) **Believers must humble themselves before others**
 - **No one else can force you to be humble; that is a decision of your own free will**
 - **But God promises that if you humble yourself before the Lord, He will exalt you**
- b) **Believers must choose to live by the principles taught in Romans 6-8 – by walking in the Spirit rather than in the flesh**

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How can churches put an end to disunity and division?

- c) **Believers must draw closer to one another through regular fellowship**
 - **This is one of the reasons that church attendance is so critical**
 - **God commands us NOT to forsake assembling with one another (Heb. 10:25)**
 - **That is the only way we can grow unified**

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The Purpose of the Church of Jesus Christ:

Eph 4:11-13 He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;

15

- **UNITY is the goal of the church, for it demonstrates that the believers in that local assembly are putting selfish considerations aside, and they are growing together in holiness and love**
- **Those are the churches that will be rewarded in the presence of Jesus**
- **If you, as an individual believer, are striving for that same objective, you will be rewarded also**

16

- **Paul urges the believers at Rome to fix their disunity problem by applying what he has taught them in the book and by separating from those who refuse to unify**

Rom 16:17 Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them.

- **Then, in a pragmatic application, he urges them to support his mission to Spain**

17

Rom 15:24 Whenever I journey to Spain, I shall come to you. For I hope to see you on my journey, and to be helped on my way there by you, if first I may enjoy your company for a while.

- **Of course, the church will not help him, if they are plagued with disunity and division**
- **They must fix their problem by applying the truths Paul has shared with them earlier in the book, then they will be inclined to support the outreach to the Gentiles in western Europe**

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2. The Root of the Problem

What is causing the disunity and division?

- We know the answer from the historical context of the early church at Rome, but Paul hints at the problem in ch. 1

Rom 1:1-3 Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated to the gospel of God which He promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures, concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh ...

19

Rom. 1:4 and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.

5 Through Him we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations for His name.

20

- Paul refers to himself as a bondservant or, literally, an indentured slave of Jesus
- Why does he use that language with the Romans who view slaves contemptuously?
- Because that is the attitude they need to have with respect to Christ and others – humble and servant-oriented
- Notice also that Paul is separated or set apart to the gospel – that is his calling and mission
- What does he mean by GOSPEL?

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Arlen Chitwood, *Message in the Gospels, Acts, Epistles*:

This “good news” had to do with the mystery revealed to Paul by the Lord (evidently after he had been taken to Arabia, then into heaven). It had to do with believing Jews and Gentiles being placed together in “the same body” as “fellow-heirs [‘joint-heirs’]” (Eph. 3:1-11); and these Jewish and Gentile believers (Christians), together, possessed a “hope” relative to one day occupying positions of honor and glory with Christ in “his heavenly kingdom” (cf. Col. 1:25-28; II Tim. 4:17, 18; Titus 1:2; 2:11-13; 3:7).

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Arlen Chitwood, *Message in the Gospels, Acts, Epistles (continued)*:

And Paul referred to the good news pertaining to this message as “my gospel” (Rom. 16:25), “our gospel” (II Cor. 4:3), “the glorious gospel of Christ [lit., ‘the gospel of the glory of Christ’]” (II Cor. 4:4), “the gospel of God” (Rom. 1:1; II Cor. 11:7), “the gospel of Christ” (Rom. 1:16; Gal. 1:7), etc. Then, numerous times Paul simply used the word “gospel” alone to refer to this good news (Rom. 1:15; Gal. 1:6).

23

- Paul says this gospel is based on the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus, who was prophesied in the OT (vs. 1-2)
- He also makes the point that Jesus is both the Son of God and a physical descendent of King David (vs. 3-4) – thus, Jesus is God incarnate – the God-man
- Paul claims in v. 5 that Jesus is the one who has given him grace and apostleship (note: Paul uses the pronoun “we,” which “is the equivalent of ‘I’ – a kind of ‘modest’ plural,” per Zane Hodges)

24

- Notice the purpose of his grace and apostleship: "for obedience to the faith among all nations for His name." (v. 5)

Zane Hodges, Romans: Deliverance From Wrath:

"The Apostle was obviously interested in bringing about a response of faith to the gospel message he proclaimed. But he was interested in more than that. He was also profoundly concerned with the obedience to God that ought to result from that faith."

25

- From the opening verses, we can determine to whom Romans is directed

Romans 1:6-7 Among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ; to all who are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

- "called of Jesus Christ" – many interpret this through a Calvinistic lens, teaching that these are the ones God has elected or called to (initial) salvation, but that is not how the word is used in the NT

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- The *called* are all who have believed on Jesus for eternal life – they are called to live righteously, by which they can qualify to become Christ's bride and co-rulers

Matt. 22:14 Many are called, but few are chosen.

- The "many" are all children of God; the "few" are the faithful ones
- Furthermore, all children of God are called to be saints (Rom. 1:7); that is, all believers are *called* to live as saints – holy, righteous ones

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- v. 8 is another confirming evidence that they are believers

Rom 1:8 First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.

- It seems that everyone knew about the believers in Rome (perhaps due to their persecution?)

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Rom 1:9-12 For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of His Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers, making request if, by some means, now at last I may find a way in the will of God to come to you. For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, so that you may be established—that is, that I may be encouraged together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me.

- Paul prays for them regularly and wants to visit them soon and minister to them spiritually

29

- Most commentators believe Paul wrote this in the late 50s AD, when he was at Corinth (Hodges says AD 56-57)

- But Paul doesn't actually make it to Rome until about AD 60
- When he finally arrives, he is under house arrest and never makes it to Spain
- Paul is ultimately executed in Rome, and most think it was due to Nero's orders

30

- Next in the text, Paul hints at the root of the problem

Rom 1:13 Now I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that I often planned to come to you (but was hindered until now), that I might have some fruit among you also, just as among the other Gentiles.

14 I am a debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to wise and to unwise.

15 So, as much as is in me, I am ready to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome also.

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- Paul mentions Gentiles, Greeks, barbarians, wise and unwise – and Jews in v. 16
- Why all these terms?
- The root of the Roman problem was cultural prejudice
- Gentiles are all who are not Jews, of course
- But Paul also uses the word *Greeks* to distinguish from Gentiles in general

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- Greeks (in the context of Romans) are not those from Greece; they are sophisticated Gentiles – at least, in their own view
- Even though they are Romans by nationality, they are Hellenized, thus the Greek word Hellen is used for the Greeks
- As if to say, they are Greco-Romans – implying a certain cultural distinction as intelligent pursuers of wisdom

33

- Paul cannot start the book of Romans by mentioning his desire to go to Spain and spread the gospel there, not to mention his need for support to get there
- The Greco-Romans will have none of it – those living in Spain are barbarians, non-sophisticated Gentiles, unwise (or foolish) and certainly not Greeks in their way of thinking

34

- In fact, to these Greeks, even the Jews are barbarians, because the Jews had been forced out of Rome by the emperor Claudius about a decade before this
- Granted, many Jews had returned to Rome, but they were always viewed contemptuously (like slaves) by the Greco-Romans
- Furthermore, the Jews had animosity toward the Gentiles of all stripes
- Thus, Paul faces major spiritual problems at Rome – cultural baggage that results in prejudices against others

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3. The Solution to the Problem

Rom 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.

- Paul gives the solution to the problem in 1:16-17 and even teaches about it doctrinally before he ever actually mentions the problem to the church in ch. 15
- The solution to the problem is the GOSPEL – but these folks are already believers!

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- This *gospel ... unto salvation* is not the gospel of grace by which they were initially saved
- It is the gospel of soul-salvation (sanctification unto maturity) that results in kingdom inheritance
- It is the good news that those who live righteously and persevere in it will be rewarded at the JSC to become Christ's bride and co-rulers in the coming kingdom
- Paul uses the word GOSPEL 13X in the book and he uses the word SALVATION 4X – and always in this sense

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How do we know this is the correct meaning?

- First, because Paul is talking to believers, NOT unbelievers
- Second, because the word BELIEVES is an active present participle and should read:
Rom 1:16 "the gospel ... is the power of God to salvation for everyone who *is believing*."
- Third, because of what Paul says in v. 17
Rom 1:17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "*The just shall live by faith.*"

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- Paul teaches that the gospel of soul-salvation unto kingdom inheritance is a message that reveals the righteousness of God
- He uses the word RIGHTEOUS 8X and the word RIGHTEOUSNESS 30X
- One of the glorious benefits of initial salvation is that we now have the PROVISION for living righteously, victorious over sin
2 Cor 5:21 For He (God the Father) made Him (Jesus Christ the Son) who knew no sin, to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

39

- The verb *might become* is in the subjunctive mood, which is the Greek mood of potential
- So this verse does not mean that those who believe on Jesus for eternal life have Christ's righteousness credited to their account
- It means those who believe on Jesus for eternal life have the potential to live righteously
- In Romans 5-8 Paul is going to outline the details of this potential and how a child of God can live righteously – by appropriating their provision

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- When believers are living "*from faith to faith*," that is, from initial, saving faith to ongoing, sanctifying faith, they are living righteously and thereby reflecting the righteous character of God
- Paul closes his first section by quoting Hab. 2:4, "*The just shall live by faith.*"
- The *just* are those who are living righteously, as corroborated everywhere else in the Bible
- They are producing faith-filled works

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The important application:

- The gospel of soul-salvation leading to kingdom inheritance is the means by which disunity and divisions can be resolved
- When believers start walking in righteousness, producing faith-filled works – in the power of the Holy Spirit – they will stop being selfish and prejudiced
- They will unite with other believers and will no longer cause division in the church of Jesus Christ

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- They will glorify God by reaching others with the truth of God's righteousness which can be theirs too
- Those who don't, spurn God's righteousness, and God declares them unrighteous
- Incidentally, v. 16 specifies that this gospel which is powerful to save (sanctify) the soul is *"to the Jew first and also to the Greek"*
- It's even for barbarians! That is why Paul claims in v. 14 he is a debtor to all men, regardless of cultural background or status

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- He must preach this good news to all!
- Anyone who has been saved initially can continue to be saved in an ongoing sanctification sense
- That is why the "Romans Road to Salvation" method of witnessing is a misnomer
- The verses typically used in the Romans Road do not refer to SALVATION in the initial sense of regeneration
- They refer to SOUL-SALVATION, sanctification unto reward

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- How glorious to think that this Gospel message is POWERFUL enough to enable believers to live righteously, in a manner than pleases the Lord, so they can become kingdom inheritors
- Are you on the pathway of sanctification that leads to reward?

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