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Romans is like the believer's constitution. M. Luther wrote, "Romans can never be read or pondered too much, and the more it is dealt with, the more precious it becomes, and the better it tastes." Ray Stedman says "Romans is the greatest of all of Paul's letters. It is probably the most powerful human document that has ever been penned." I would add, if you understand Romans, you have the key to all the Scriptures.

We must see the apostle Paul pacing back and forth, dictating this letter. He's writing to the saints in Rome (which in Paul's day had a population of over one million people; many were slaves). He's planting churches that are "Biblically-rooted, Christ-centered, and Holy Spirit-empowered." Paul has already written **Galatians, 1-2 Th., and 1-2 Cor.** He's now addressing a church he didn't found nor has he visited (it was probably started by some of those converted on the Day of Pentecost—**Acts 2:10**). He wants to build up and encourage this Gentile-Jewish church in the world's most powerful city. "I'm a slave of Jesus who calls people from the nations to come to faith in Him."

Read :1-7. PAUL TO THE CALLED, BELOVED SAINTS IN ROME. In this introductory sentence, he begins preparing these saints for a visit. Written around A.D. 57 from Corinth, Paul first gives his credentials: **:1-2 Paul, a slave (doulos) of Christ Jesus, called-apostle** [a sent-one by God; his authority came from none other than God Himself], **set apart (mark off by boundaries) for the gospel of God** [my purpose is to present the Good-News of God], **:2 which He promised beforehand through His prophets (ones who speak forth) in the holy [#40, hagios, sacred] Scriptures** [that Good News tells us of Jesus, promised beforehand in the OT; Paul will quote or paraphrase OT Scripture no less than 60 times in Romans]. The apostles' teaching was the foundation of the Church (**Eph. 2:20**). Paul was consumed with this message.

:1 A slave was the property of his master, his will swallowed up in his master's. "That's who I am by nature and by choice." **A called apostle**, a 'sent one from God', Paul was to spread God's Good News of Jesus. **Set apart**, called, for a purpose, Paul was carrying out the orders of the One sending him, proclaiming the message of Jesus, God's Good News, to the saints in Rome.

:2 Paul knew who he was and his purpose in life. How? By his spiritual giftedness and by his heart for ministry. As Christians in the one Body of Jesus, each one of us has received a spiritual gift(s), and, Jesus gives us places to use those gifts. Do you know yourself as a slave of Jesus, both by nature and by choice? Do you know what God has gifted and commissioned you to do? Do you know the message, God's Good News, God has given us to believe

and share? Not Paul's own creation, but God's Good News, it was no after-thought of God but the culmination of history, rooted/grounded in the OT.

:3-4 :3 concerning His Son [Paul's good-news message about God's Son Jesus is the heart of the Good News], **who was born of a descendant (seed, sperm) of David according to the flesh** [born into king David's family line], **:4 who was declared** [filled the horizon] **the Son of God** [God's Son, the essence of God] **with power by the resurrection from the dead** [when He was raised from the dead] **according to the Spirit of holiness** [by the power of the Holy Spirit; from **#40 hagios, sacred, like holy Scriptures :2**], **Jesus Christ our Lord** [God's Son is Jesus Christ our Lord]!

:3 Jesus came of the very seed of king David, a former Israeli king (**2 Sam. 7:16, Is. 11:1-10**). Jesus was an actual historical figure, of the royal line of David. You can trace His ancestors! Truly human, as well as truly God. When He came, He didn't come to act as God. He laid aside the exercise of His deity. He came to operate as a man filled with God.

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The Rome of Paul's day was much like our conditions today. In this day of little absolute truth, we have Good News, about THE truth, Jesus our Lord. Make the message clear: it's all about Jesus, and, just Who every person needs. This Good News is God's power for salvation to everyone who believes, for all—Jews/Gentiles, slave/free, old/young, male/female, rich/poor, educated/uneducated. Everyone!

:5-6 through whom we have received grace (undeserved favor) and apostleship to bring about the obedience (to hear under, to respond, listening that leads to action) of faith among all the Gentiles [nations, usually referring to unbelieving non-Jews; see **Acts 9:15**] **for His name's sake** [so they will believe and obey Him, bringing thanks and honor to His name], **:6 among whom you also are the called of Jesus** [OT Joshua = Yahweh saves] **Christ**. The apostles were dependable messengers & witnesses, sent from God, equipped by God, and given God's message to proclaim. The desired response was obedience that comes from faith, an obedience that would be brought about from trusting God. The report of your obedience has reached to all (**16:19**). It's all for God's name—His glory and reputation. "Cultivated lives so filled with Jesus that obedience became as natural to them as breathing."

:7 to all [of you in Rome] **who are beloved** [God's loved ones, agapē loved, used of Jesus by the Father, "a love that is selfless, sacrificial, rooted in the will rather than the emotions."'] **of God in Rome, called-saints** (lit. **holy ones, set apart ones, from #40!**): **Grace to you and peace (wholeness, completeness) from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ** [may They give you grace

and peace]. All of you, please realize how God loves you and who He has made you: holy ones! You're God's loved one and a saint! Remember this when you're going through hard times, feeling unlovable, feeling worthless.

Romans is God's Good News shared through a written letter. In :1-7 we've looked at the credentials of Jesus—promised beforehand in the OT, a descendant of David (truly human), by the resurrection from the dead declared God's Son (truly divine). Jesus is our message, the Truth. The apostles spread God's Good News of the Lord Jesus, the purpose being people trusting God and made holy and becoming obedient. May that describe you and me!

"Our Father, may we see the implications of these verses for our own lives and confidently share this Good News with others. We also thank You for Your written truth, passed on to us by the prophets and apostles. May our study of Your Word bring about an obedience that springs from faith. Thank You that we are called, loved, and holy people. What amazing truths! May our thinking, choices, actions, and words reflect that we know who we are in Your Son Jesus." What differences do these truths make in your everyday life?

READ :8-15. PAUL PRAYS FOR AND IS EAGER TO PROCLAIM GOD'S GOOD NEWS TO THE ROMANS. "Paul affirmed them in :8, prayed for them in :9, desired to be with them in :10, and promised to assist them in :11-13." **:8 First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, because your faith is being proclaimed throughout the whole world.** [I'll begin by telling you how I thank God through Jesus Christ for all of you. The news of your faith has become known everywhere!] In the capital city of Rome, there was a thriving community of believers, known, not for the size of the congregation, but for their **faith [and obedience 16:19] in God!** Faith is taking God at His Word and, as a result of trusting God, acting on the truth! Is your and my faith being proclaimed?

:9-10 For God, whom I serve in my spirit in the [preaching of the] gospel [the Good News] of His Son, is my witness [as to] how unceasingly I make mention of you [God knows how often I pray for you], :10 always in my prayers making request, if perhaps now at last by the will of God I may succeed in coming to you [I pray for the opportunity, God willing, to come at last to see you]. I serve God as I proclaim His Son. Over and over I thank God for you and pray for you and **am constantly asking Him that He will somehow make it possible for me to come to see you** [I've desired this for a long time]."

:11-12 For I long to see you so that (hina) I may impart some spiritual gift to you, that you may be established [I want to use my grace gift(s) of the Spirit, to deepen you in the faith]; **:12 that is, that I may be encouraged together with you while among you, each of us by the other's faith, both yours and mine.** There was a strong desire to be part of what God was doing in the lives of others. Paul's goal was to present every person complete in Christ (**Col. 1:28-29**). They'd all be mutually strengthened by one another's faith and obedience and gifts. This is what makes a congregation strong and effective.

:13 I do not want you to be unaware [I'd like you to understand], **brethren** (brothers & sisters), **that often I have planned to come to you (and have been prevented so far) so that I may obtain some fruit among you also, even as among the rest of the Gentiles.** As apostle to the Gentiles, he was concerned

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:15 So, for my part, I am eager to preach the gospel to you also [I'm so excited to share God's Good News with you] **who are in Rome.** He had already established churches in Galatia, Macedonia, and Asia Minor. By the gospel, he doesn't mean just how to become a Christian, but also who God has made us, how to walk as a Christian, and what that looks like in action—His fruit. Eager, passion burned with the urgency: "Come this way, the escape route!" The Gospel is what is explained so well in Paul's letter to the Romans.

Here was a man called by God, eager to share his spiritual gifts, concerned about his fellow believers, and committed to doing whatever it took to come to them and be encouraged. May his tribe increase! Arrest, trials, 2 long years in prison, and shipwreck would take place before Paul's prayer would be answered. What are we known for? What is your ministry? With whom are you eager to share God's Good News and your spiritual giftedness?

READ :16-17. THE GOSPEL OF GOD: THE JUST SHALL LIVE BY FAITH. **:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel** [the Good News of Jesus], **for it is the power (#1411 dunamis) of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek** [the Gentile]. **:17 For in it the righteousness of God** [This Good News tells us how God makes us right/just with Him] **is revealed from faith to faith** [accomplished from start to finish by faith]; **as it is written** [in the Scriptures], **"BUT THE RIGHTEOUS SHALL LIVE BY FAITH [Hab. 2:4]."** These 2 verses form the basis of the entire book of Romans.

The Gospel is the power of God & reveals the justice of God. We don't make God's gospel important or relevant or powerful; it is these things. It's not about what we can do for Him, but what He has done for us! We're just to proclaim God's message of Jesus. As a young monk, Martin Luther was overwhelmed by his sins. He spent hours confessing his sins to a priest. Then he came across **Rom. 1:17: not by works, law, confessing sins, but by faith alone.** These words changed Luther's life. How has God's Good News changed your life?

:16 "I'm not ashamed of the message I received from Jesus." Rome, the great city, powerful, all kinds of religions, famous for her law and system of government, "was the very embodiment of pride in human greatness." But Paul was proclaiming Jesus crucified—to the Gentiles weak, to the Jews foolish, but it was God's power for salvation. This message was something to be proud of. It contains what all of mankind need (FHIDLS). God offers it to all. It was needed by Rome because **it's the power of God (deliverance, rescue) resulting in salvation to the one who believes, whether to Jew or Greek.** It's God's power and justice, Good News of Jesus as Lord. Share this reasoned presentation of God's Good News. The Good News is God's power to change

lives, any life! It was through Israel that salvation was to come to the world.

We realize this message is counterculture today because everyone is supposed to “find his/her own way.” But only one message is truth, and Paul had it. What must we humans do? Believe in and call on the One the message presents: The Lord Jesus. Stake our lives on Jesus and His work. The sharing of this message began with the Jews; it continues on to Gentiles, including us!

The gospel is still a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but it’s God’s only way! Proclaim it. Don’t be ashamed of it; be proud of it. Only the power of God is able to overcome man’s sinful nature and impart spiritual life, the New Covenant. Yes, Rome was known for its power, but the Romans’ power was powerless when it came to changing hearts. Only God can do this.

:17 In this gospel God's righteousness/justice is revealed. God's Power (:16), Righteousness (:17), Wrath (:18)! God’s power & righteousness are available to us, by faith. Righteousness = God’s justice satisfied. Righteousness, the understanding of justice, acceptance, security. With God! What is ‘right/just’ can be determined only with reference to Him. God’s right/just ways have been revealed. By faith in Jesus, we can be right/just with God because His justice was satisfied at the cross of Jesus! **It's from faith to faith** (out of faith into faith): Through our faith in the Person and work of Jesus, we are justified (**Gal. 2:16, Phil. 3:8-9**), then we are to continue to walk by faith. It happens only as we trust in the Person and work of Another. Paul quotes from the OT (**Hab. 2:4**; also **Gal. 3:11, Heb. 10:38**): **"The righteous shall live by faith."**

God spoke these words to Habakkuk when the prophet was struggling with his confidence in God's wisdom. God was going to use a pagan nation to punish His own people of Israel and that confused the prophet. “Habakkuk, trust Me. The righteous shall live by faith in Me, by trusting Me, My words, My ways.” God does not first ask men to behave but to believe. Faith is a way of life.

Hab. 2:4 and **Rom. 1:17** contain the words that so impacted the apostle Paul and Martin Luther. If we reject what God has done, God's righteousness/justice fairly condemns us. It’s absolutely perfect, holy. But, if we know, believe, and act on who Jesus is and what He has done, we're saved, delivered, right/just with God Himself! It’s the most important decision you will ever make. When was that moment for you? How is faith in Jesus a way of life for you? What a God!

In these last days has spoken to us in His Son (**Heb. 1:1-2**). Can such news get any greater! After years of sharing this message, Paul never lost his zeal. May we too never tire of sharing this message of Jesus, Lord, Savior, Life.

NOTES

#93 unrighteousness, 7X in Romans: 1:18 (2X), 29, 2:8, 3:5, 6:13, 9:14

#94 unjust, unrighteous, 1X in Romans: 3:5

#1342 righteous, just, 7X in Romans: 1:17, 2:13, 3:10, 26, 5:7, 19, 7:12

#1343 righteousness, justice, 92X in Bible, 36X in Romans

#1344 justified (from 1342), 60X in Bible, 15X in Romans

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We realize this message is counterculture today because everyone is supposed to “find his/her own way.” But only one message is truth, and Paul had it. What must we humans do? Believe in and call on the One the message presents: The Lord Jesus. Stake our lives on Jesus and His work. The sharing of this message began with the Jews; it continues on to Gentiles, including us!

The gospel is still a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but it’s God’s only way! Proclaim it. Don’t be ashamed of it; be proud of it. Only the power of God is able to overcome man’s sinful nature and impart spiritual life, the New Covenant. Yes, Rome was known for its power, but the Romans’ power was powerless when it came to changing hearts. Only God can do this.

:17 In this gospel God's righteousness/justice is revealed. God's Power (:16), Righteousness (:17), Wrath (:18)! God’s power & righteousness are available to us, by faith. Righteousness = God’s justice satisfied. Righteousness, the understanding of justice, acceptance, security. With God! What is ‘right/just’ can be determined only with reference to Him. God’s right/just ways have been revealed. By faith in Jesus, we can be right/just with God because His justice was satisfied at the cross of Jesus! **It's from faith to faith** (out of faith into faith): Through our faith in the Person and work of Jesus, we are justified (**Gal. 2:16, Phil. 3:8-9**), then we are to continue to walk by faith. It happens only as we trust in the Person and work of Another. Paul quotes from the OT (**Hab. 2:4**; also **Gal. 3:11, Heb. 10:38**): **"The righteous shall live by faith."**

God spoke these words to Habakkuk when the prophet was struggling with his confidence in God's wisdom. God was going to use a pagan nation to punish His own people of Israel and that confused the prophet. “Habakkuk, trust Me. The righteous shall live by faith in Me, by trusting Me, My words, My ways.” God does not first ask men to behave but to believe. Faith is a way of life.

Hab. 2:4 and **Rom. 1:17** contain the words that so impacted the apostle Paul and Martin Luther. If we reject what God has done, God's righteousness/justice fairly condemns us. It’s absolutely perfect, holy. But, if we know, believe, and act on who Jesus is and what He has done, we're saved, delivered, right/just with God Himself! It’s the most important decision you will ever make. When was that moment for you? How is faith in Jesus a way of life for you? What a God!

In these last days has spoken to us in His Son (**Heb. 1:1-2**). Can such news get any greater! After years of sharing this message, Paul never lost his zeal. May we too never tire of sharing this message of Jesus, Lord, Savior, Life.

NOTES

#93 unrighteousness, 7X in Romans: 1:18 (2X), 29, 2:8, 3:5, 6:13, 9:14

#94 unjust, unrighteous, 1X in Romans: 3:5

#1342 righteous, just, 7X in Romans: 1:17, 2:13, 3:10, 26, 5:7, 19, 7:12

#1343 righteousness, justice, 92X in Bible, 36X in Romans

#1344 justified (from 1342), 60X in Bible, 15X in Romans

1:1-7 NASB :1 Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, :2 which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures, :3 concerning His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh, :4 who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord, :5 through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for His name's sake, :6 among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ; :7 to all who are beloved of God in Rome, called as saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

NASB :8-15 :8 First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, because your faith is being proclaimed throughout the whole world. :9 For God, whom I serve in my spirit in the [preaching of the] gospel of His Son, is my witness [as to] how unceasingly I make mention of you, :10 always in my prayers making request, if perhaps now at last by the will of God I may succeed in coming to you. :11 For I long to see you so that I may impart some spiritual gift to you, that you may be established; :12 that is, that I may be encouraged together with you [while] among you, each of us by the other's faith, both yours and mine. :13 I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that often I have planned to come to you (and have been prevented so far) so that I may obtain some fruit among you also, even as among the rest of the Gentiles. :14 I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. :15 So, for my part, I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.

:16-17 :16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. :17 For in it [the] righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "BUT THE RIGHTEOUS [MAN] SHALL LIVE BY FAITH."

1:1-7 NLT :1 This letter is from Paul, a slave of Christ Jesus, chosen by God to be an apostle and sent out to preach his Good News. :2 God promised this Good News long ago through his prophets in the holy Scriptures. :3 The Good News is about his Son. In his earthly life he was born into King David's family line, :4 and he was shown to be the Son of God when he was raised from the dead by the power of the Holy Spirit. He is Jesus Christ our Lord. :5 Through Christ, God has given us the privilege and authority as apostles to tell Gentiles everywhere what God has done for them, so that they will believe and obey him, bringing glory to his name. :6 And you are included among those Gentiles who have been called to belong to Jesus Christ. :7 I am writing to all of you in Rome who are loved by God and are called to be his own holy people. May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give you grace and peace.

NLT :8-15 :8 Let me say first that I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith in him is being talked about all over the world. :9 God knows how often I pray for you. Day and night I bring you and your needs in prayer to God, whom I serve with all my heart by spreading the Good News about his Son. :10 One of the things I always pray for is the opportunity, God willing, to come at last to see you. :11 For I long to visit you so I can bring you some spiritual gift that will help you grow strong in the Lord. :12 When we get together, I want to encourage you in your faith, but I also want to be encouraged by yours. :13 I want you to know, dear brothers and sisters, that I planned many times to visit you, but I was prevented until now. I want to work among you and see spiritual fruit, just as I have seen among other Gentiles. :14 For I have a great sense of obligation to people in both the civilized world and the rest of the world, to the educated and uneducated alike. :15 So I am eager to come to you in Rome, too, to preach the Good News. :16-17 :16 For I am not ashamed of this Good News about Christ. It is the power of God at work, saving everyone who believes—the Jew first and also the Gentile. :17 This Good News tells us how God makes us right in his sight. This is accomplished from start to finish by faith. As the Scriptures say, "It is through faith that a righteous person has life."