

## Romans 1:8-17 Answers God's Power for Salvation

### Background:

**Why is it thought Paul was in Corinth when he wrote this?** See *Romans 16:23, 1 Corinthians 1:14*. We learn from *Romans 16:23* that Paul was staying with someone named Gaius when he wrote *Romans*, probably the same Gaius of *1 Corinthians 1:14*. Thus, he was most likely in Corinth (Greece), about 600 miles away. If you drove it today it would take about 20 hours by time you took a ferry across the Ionian Sea. Paul was on his third missionary journey so the date of writing would have been around A.D. 57.

### Overview:

The epistle of *Romans* has 16 chapters and can be divided 5 sections: Sin, Salvation, Sanctification, Sovereignty and Service.

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**\*\*\*\*What prayer request did Paul have (1:8-15)?** Paul asked God that somehow he would succeed in coming to them, *1:10*. It appears Paul had previously been frustrated in going there. He also had a problem in getting to Thessalonica (*1Th 2:18*).

**Why was Paul thankful for these Roman believers (1:8)?** He was thankful because their faith was being proclaimed all the world over. Paul was similarly thankful for the spreading report of the Thessalonians' faith in Greece (*1Th 1:8*).

**Application:** This reflects Paul's value system. It was important to him that people everywhere come to faith in Jesus. He got excited about that. He praised God for it. **Heart Test:** *Does this type of news excite you as much as it did Paul? If not, why not?*

**Literal vs. Literary: What did Paul mean by world (1:8)? Had the news reached China or South America?** Paul's reference to all the world meant the world of the Roman Empire. The *New York Times* claims to print all the news that's fit to print (it's not worth reading if they didn't print it). In the same way, first century Romans were aware of the existence of India and Northern Europe, but so far as what really mattered to them, all the world consisted only of the Roman Empire. **Why this matters:** When Jesus declared the gospel would be preached to the whole world and then the end would come, did He mean the world of the Roman Empire and the end of the Jewish age in A.D. 70 (literarily) or did He mean the literal world and the end of the church age (literally)?

**1. Why do you suppose there such worldwide talk over the faith of the believers in Rome (1:8)?** Rome was capital of the imperial Roman Empire, a strategic city for the launch of the gospel. It held tremendous potential and great influence. Since all roads led to Rome news of the establishment of a church there spread far and wide.

**2. In 1:9-10, how did Paul illustrate his affection for them?** He showed the extent of his affection in the fact that he prayed for them regularly and by his prayer request that he be able to visit them. He even called God as witness to the fact of his prayers (1:9a).

**3. According to 1:11-12, what did Paul hope to accomplish in his visit?** (Reread aloud). He wanted to impart a spiritual gift to them.

**4.** In the song The Candy Man, the question is asked, “Who can take tomorrow, dip it in a dream, separate out the sorrow and collect up all the cream? The candy man can.” What is this about Paul imparting a spiritual gift to them? Was Paul a spiritual candy man? **In what way could Paul impart a spiritual to them (1:11)?** See 1 Corinthians 12:7-11, Hebrews 10:24-25. It is the Holy Spirit, not Paul, who imparts spiritual gifts to individual believers (1Co 12:7-11). The spiritual gift Paul wanted to give them was the gift of being strengthened. Paul explained what he meant in the next verse: “that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine” (1:12).

**Application:** A large part of a church meeting is to give each believer the opportunity to mutually encourage one other in the faith. If all we discuss during the Holy Meal is hunting or sewing or our jobs or computers or games or politics, then we may be failing to fulfill a large part of what church meetings are to be about:

ESV **Hebrews 10:24-25** . . . let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together . . . but encouraging one another . . .

**Application: Did you consider how to stir the others up to love and good deeds before you arrived here today? Or did you just show up?**

**Based on 1:13-15, why else did Paul want to visit Rome?** (Reread). Paul wanted to reap a harvest there, evidently a reference to preaching the Gospel in Rome so as to see more Gentiles come to faith.

**5. How did Paul get under obligation to preach the gospel to both Greek and barbarians (1:14)?** See Acts 9:15. Jesus had a little something to do with placing Paul under obligation to take the gospel to non-Jewish peoples (i.e., Gentiles, *ethnos*). Paul was drafted into service; he had a divine commission.

ESV **Acts 9:15** . . . he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel.

**6. We see here four names: Jew, Gentile, Greek and Barbarian. A Gentile (1:14) is a non-Jew. What is the difference between a Greek and a barbarian (1:14)?** Greek was the language of the Roman Empire. Thus the Greeks (*hellén*) were the citizens of the Roman Empire. In this sense the Romans were Greeks, too. A barbarian (*barbaros*) was anyone outside the empire who could not speak Greek (Thayer #915, NBD, p. 124). They would have considered those of us who only speak English to be barbarians.

**7. The Big Picture: What is the overall point of this paragraph (1:8-15)?** This paragraph serves to reveal the reason for Paul's desire to minister in Rome: To strengthen the church and to preach the gospel.

**8. What applications can you think of based on 1:8-15?**

1. I should be thankful to God when other people come to faith (1:8).
2. I should consciously seek ways to encourage other believers (and to be encouraged) in the faith (1:12).  
(Do you ever give any thought as to how to encourage others? Or it is just all about you?)
3. I should be eager to evangelize my world (1:14-15).

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**\*\*\*\*Why was Paul not ashamed of the gospel (1:16-17)?** He was not ashamed because it is the power of God for salvation.

**What does gospel mean (1:16)?**

The message of the gospel is articulated in 1 Corinthians 15:1-4. Christ made salvation possible through his death, burial and resurrection.

**9. What had Paul just written that might have caused him to say he was not ashamed of the gospel (1:16)?** He had just written about his desire to take the gospel to Greeks and barbarians and to come preach it there in Rome. Also, it would be easy to be intimidated by the thought of preaching the gospel in Rome since it was the imperial capital, Caesar was there, it is sophisticated, intellectual and powerful. His delay in coming to Rome had nothing to do with his being ashamed of the gospel (Hendriksen, p. 59).

**10. In what sense is the gospel the power of God for salvation (1:16)?** *See ahead to Romans 5:6-11.* Power is from *dunamis* (basis for dynamic) and means "ability". Salvation is from the Lord, not ourselves. We are powerless to save ourselves. The gospel is about God's power for salvation. How power is it? This quote by Spurgeon says it all:

**Spurgeon & Gospel Power:** "When you say, 'Can God make me become a Christian?' I tell you yes, for herein rests the power of the gospel. It does not ask your consent; but it gets it. It does not say, 'Will you have it?' but it makes you willing in the day of God's power . . . The gospel wants not your consent, it gets it. It knocks the enmity out of your heart. You say, 'I do not want to be saved'; Christ says you shall be. He makes our will turn round, and then you cry, 'Lord save, or I perish!'"

It is not so much that we are saved by the plan of salvation as we are saved by the Man of Salvation: The Lord Jesus.

ESV **John 10:28** I give them eternal life . . .

**11. What is it that we need salvation from (1:16)?** See ahead to 1:18. We need salvation from the wrath of God upon us for our sinfulness. It has been said that the hard part in evangelism is not getting people saved, it is getting them lost. People simply do not believe they are under the wrath of God. There is little conviction of sin. God has been reduced to a slightly out of touch benign grandfather figure who dotes over people, who is never critical and who greatly appreciates any spare time you can give Him.

**Liberalism's False Gospel:** Liberal theology typically posits that Jesus' death on the cross had nothing to do with turning away or satisfying God's wrath against sin. They teach that since God is love there is no wrath for anyone. "The Bible says God so loved the world, not that God so hated the world!" Everyone will go to heaven, regardless of his good or bad deeds, regardless of his faith or lack of faith. Jesus' death on the cross was not propitiatory but merely intended to show the extent of God's love for us. Jesus came to announce that we are all already saved, not that we need to be saved from anything (especially not God's wrath).

**12. Based on 1:16-17, how can a person get the God's power for salvation?** See *Ephesians 2:8-9*. It is for everyone who believes. Righteousness comes by faith. It is *sola fide*. Evidence that a person has experienced the power of the gospel for salvation is that he will respond in faith to the truth of the gospel.

ESV **Ephesians 2:8-9** . . . by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works . . .

**Five Solas:** The Five Solas of the Reformation were sola fide, sola scriptura, sola gratia, solus Christus and soli deo Gloria.

**13. How is it that salvation was to the Jew first (1:16)?** See *John 4:22, Acts 1:8*. Historically, the message of salvation came from the Jewish people (Jesus and all the apostles were Jewish) and was proclaimed to them first. The future role of the Jews is a major topic in Romans 9-11.

ESV **John 4:22** . . . salvation is from the Jews.

ESV **Acts 1:8** . . . you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.

**Review: According to 1:17, what is revealed in the gospel?** The righteousness of God is revealed. It is righteousness *from* God. He gives it to you; He confers it.

**14. What does righteousness (1:17) mean?** One can see from the word itself that it has something to do with being right. The Greek is *dikaioné* and refers to "the state of him who is such as he ought to be" (Thayer). It is a legal term connected to the idea of justice or being just. To be righteous implies a right relationship to the will of God (NBD, p. 1031).

**Review: If you want to have righteousness from God, how should you live (according to 1:17)?** You should live by faith.

**15. What does “from faith for faith” mean (1:17)?** It is like saying through and through or beginning and ending in faith. The NIV has “from first to last”.

**16. In 1:17, why did Paul quote from Habakkuk 2:4?** Perhaps he quoted from Habakkuk to set the stage for later proving that the idea of salvation by faith (as opposed to works) is consistent with the teaching of the Hebrew Scriptures (the same Holy Scriptures that promised the Messiah).

**How do Habakkuk’s life and times help us understand living by faith?** Habakkuk lived in difficult times and was called upon to trust Jehovah even though political disaster (via invasion) was imminent. We are not to question the ways of God’s providence. Habakkuk had joy despite circumstances.

**ESV Habakkuk 3:17-18** Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food, the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the LORD; I will take joy in the God of my salvation.

**17. What gospel application can you make to your own life from 1:16-17?**

1. I can only obtain salvation and righteousness from God through faith.
2. I should not be ashamed of the gospel.
3. I should live my whole life by faith (not just trust God for salvation).

### So What?

**18. What does 1:8-17 teach us about the gospel?**

**Review: What main application for your life does 1:8-17 hold?** One I feel keenly is the importance of only being ashamed of the gospel. It is also important to realize that the gospel is powerful unto salvation. It is not about me convincing people — that is God’s job and He is the only One who can do it (though He may use me in that process).

\*\*\*\* = ask this question before reading the text aloud. Doing so will cause focus.

- These lessons are designed for a 45 minute session and are based on the text of the ESV.
- You can hear this lesson being taught at [www.SermonAudio.Com/NTRF](http://www.SermonAudio.Com/NTRF).

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