

The Gospel is The Power of God for Salvation

Romans Message #2

Romans 1:7 – 17

Sermon by Pastor Sylvia Chan

Today we continue to study the book of Romans. Last time we studied Romans 1:1 – 6, now let's look at the next passage.

^{NASB} **Romans 1:7 – 17** ⁷to 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. 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 in order 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 And I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that often I have planned to come to you (and have been prevented thus far) in order that I might 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 Thus, for my part, I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome. 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." (Rom 1:7-17 NASB)

Saints – Holy ones, those separated to Yahweh God

In verse 7 Paul said, "to all who are beloved of God in Rome, called as saints"; I have explained the meaning of the word "saint" in my earlier sermon "Saints" in the series called "Titles of Christians". You can refer to that sermon to understand the origin and meaning of the word "saint". (All my previous sermons have been uploaded to our YouTube channel @cdc_online; sermon transcriptions are available at www.gospelandsalvation.com.) Here I won't go into all the details, but will simply say that saints are the holy ones, those separated to Yahweh God.

Paul's Christlike attitude

Paul continues in verse 8: "First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, because your faith is being proclaimed throughout the whole world."

Here Paul thanks Yahweh God for the faith of the brethren in Rome. Usually we give thanks to God when we have received something, either physical or spiritual, but here Paul gives thanks to God because of other people's faith. That tells us a lot about Paul's heart.

Most people in the world are envious of others. When they see that others are successful, they feel envious. I have read some psychology articles saying that some parents are even envious of their children's success. But here Paul is giving thanks to Yahweh God because of the faith of the Christians in Rome; from this we can see Paul's Christlike and selfless attitude.

Then Paul continues in vv. 9 – 10: "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, always in my prayers making request, if perhaps now at last by the will of God I may succeed in coming to you."

Please take notice that in v.10 Paul says, "always in my prayers making request, if perhaps now at last by the will of God I may succeed in coming to you." He is praying that at last he might be able to come to the church in Rome. For some reason he had not been able to come to Rome. It means that he had never seen them before, yet he kept praying for them.

It is easy to pray for other people once in a while; most Christians, even non-believers, can do that. But to always pray for others, most people cannot do it. And more than that, to pray always for those you have never met before (the key word is "always"), that is almost impossible for most people. Yet Paul had such concern for the brethren in Rome whom he had never met that he would always pray for them. You can see the heart of a true bond-servant of Christ Jesus.

Paul wanted to preach the gospel to all men

Why did Paul want to come to the church in Rome? In verses 11 – 15 Paul said:

"For I long to see you in order 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 And I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that often I have planned to come to you (and have been prevented thus far) in order that I might 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 Thus, for my part, I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome."

In verse 14 Paul said he was under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians. Please take notice of the word “barbarian,” whose meaning is quite different from its meaning in modern English. The original Greek word for “barbarian” in v.14 is *βάρβαρος* (*barbaros*). According to Greek-English dictionaries, *barbaros* simply means a person who does not participate in Greek culture and Greek civilization. At that time, the whole Roman Empire was dominated by Greek culture. In other words, *barbaros* simply means a non-Greek.

In the same sentence, Paul also said he was under obligation both to the wise and to the foolish. A wise person in the Bible is not simply someone who is intelligent. Let’s look at some passages to understand the biblical meaning of “wise”:

^{NASB} **Proverbs 9:10** The fear of the LORD (Yahweh) is the beginning of wisdom, And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding. (Pro 9:10 NASB)

^{NASB} **Proverbs 15:33** The fear of the LORD (Yahweh) is the instruction for wisdom, And before honor *comes* humility. (Pro 15:33 NASB)

These two passages say that the fear of the LORD (Yahweh) is the beginning of wisdom. Therefore the wise are those who fear the LORD (Yahweh).

And the word “foolish” in the Bible doesn’t mean slow or unintelligent. Let’s look at some passages to understand the meaning of “foolish”.

^{NASB} **Luke 24:25** And He said to them, “O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken!” (Luk 24:25 NASB)

The word “He” in this passage refers to the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ. This passage shows that foolish men are slow to believe in all that the prophets have spoken. Prophets are sent by Yahweh God; when foolish men don’t believe the words of the prophets, it means they don’t believe the words of God.

^{NASB} **Titus 3:3** For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another. (Tit 3:3 NASB)

This passage says that foolish people are in some related way disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, full of malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another.

These two passages show that in the Bible, the foolish people are those who don't believe in Yahweh God and who disobey His teaching.

Paul wanted to come to the church in Rome because he wanted to impart to them some spiritual gift to build them up. What is that spiritual gift? Verse 14 says Paul wanted to preach the gospel to both Greeks and non-Greeks, to both the people who fear God and those who say there is no God. So the spiritual gift is the word of God, the gospel; and Paul wanted to preach the gospel to all people!

Why did Paul want to preach the gospel to all people? Please take notice that he even wanted to preach the gospel to the brethren—the Christians—in Rome. We often think that we preach the gospel only to the non-believers, but Paul wanted to preach the gospel to all people, to both Greeks and non-Greeks, to both the people who fear God and those who say there is no God, and even to Christians! Why?

Romans 1:16 – 17 “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.”

Paul was eager to preach the gospel to all men because:

- The gospel is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes
- In the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith
- The righteous man shall live by faith.

“Gospel” means the good news. Many people think the gospel is all about believing in Jesus in order to have eternal life in heaven, and once you become a Christian, you don't need the gospel any more! That is definitely not true, it is wrong! The gospel is about the kingdom of God. Christians live in the spiritual kingdom of God right now, and we always need the gospel. I have preached a series of sermons called “The Kingdom of God and Eternal Life”; you can refer to the videos at our YouTube channel @cdc_online, or you can visit www.gospelandsalvation.com for the sermon transcriptions.

Here in Romans 1:16 – 17 Paul says the gospel is the power of God for salvation. Please take notice that Paul equates the gospel to the power of God, he is not merely saying that the “gospel is a message about the power of God for salvation...” No, he says, “the gospel is the power of God for salvation...”

The gospel is the power of God, and that power of God can change people's hearts. After you listen to the gospel, the power of God goes into your heart and changes you. Many Christians can testify about this; I can definitely testify about this.

I was very proud of myself. As a self-made very moral person, I despised most Christians. I was a Vietnamese refugee who escaped out of Vietnam, and was accepted by the Canadian government. I arrived in Ottawa in 1979. Several Christian churches came out to help the Vietnamese refugees, and they also invited us to attend their church meetings. At first I didn't believe at all. I even despised them, but because they had helped us so much, it was hard for us to decline their invitation. So I went to their meetings even though I didn't believe. But as I listened to the gospel, the power of the gospel went into my heart and I was changed gradually. Thanks to the loving-kindness of Yahweh God, He had been helping me again and again in my desperate moments. Finally I committed my life totally to Yahweh God and the Lord Jesus Christ. You can read my testimony in my book "Goodness and Lovingkindness Will Follow Me All the Days of my Life," available at our Christian Disciples Church website:

www.christiandc.org and www.gospelandsalvation.com.

That's why Paul wants to preach the gospel to all people, Christians as well as non-believers, Greeks as well as Jews, because the gospel is the power of God, and the power of God can change people's hearts.

Next week we will continue to study:

- In the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith
- The righteous man shall live by faith.

Conclusion

Let's sum up everything we have studied today:

- Paul was praying for the church in Rome which he had never met before; that shows the heart of a true bond-servant of Christ-Jesus
- Paul wanted to preach the gospel to all people, even to Christians!
- The gospel is the power of God for salvation. When you listen to the gospel, the power of God goes into your heart and changes you!