

Notes

The Saints in Rome (1:6-15)

- Though Paul has never met these believers to whom he is writing this magnificent treatise, his heart is especially drawn to this flock in Rome, and he desires to help the Roman believers spiritually.

1. Greeting the Saints in Rome (1:6-7)

- 3 things are said of these believers in Rome:
 - Just as Paul is called to salvation and apostleship, so the Roman believers are “*called of Jesus Christ.*” The believers in Rome (and all of us) have received the sovereign call of God. Christ has called us, and He owns us!
 - The Roman believers are “*beloved of God.*” God has a special love for those who are in Christ. This love is especially manifested in our adoption as children of God (1 Jn 3:1; Eph 5:25).
 - These believers in Rome are “called (*to be*) saints.” They are not called because they are saints; but they became saints through that calling. The word “saint” means, “holy ones,” or “set apart ones.” If you know Christ as your Saviour, you are a saint, set apart unto God by His calling (Phil 4:21-22; Col 1:2). “Saints” never refer to a special group of believers who tower over other Christians (cf 1 Cor 1:2). Every Christian is a “saint,” and the implication is that we are to live as saints, set apart for God and His service.
- All of us who believe in the gospel of Christ, are called of Jesus Christ, beloved of God and called (to be) saints. This description of the believers is not based upon anything that we have done, but what God has done for us. We have received grace for salvation and service.
- Paul concludes his salutation with a usual benediction found in all his letters:
 - Grace - Grace is God’s undeserved favour or kindness in the gospel. It is a common Greek salutation.
 - Peace - The Christian is at peace with God through the Lord Jesus Christ (5:1). Peace is a common greeting among the Jews.Both the blessings – grace and peace - come from God the Father through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, and flow from the gospel.

2. Encouraging the Saints in Rome (1:8-15)

- Paul takes pains to explain his motive in writing to the Roman believers. Paul explains 4 ways in which he encourages them spiritually:
 - (i) *Expressing Thanks for the Faith of the Saints in Rome, 1:8*
 - Paul expresses thanks to God for the Roman believers because their faith is well spoken of throughout the Roman Empire. It is encouraging & edifying to fellow believers when we express thanks to God for their consistent and godly witness (cf 3 Jn 4). Wherever Paul went, he heard about the remarkable faith of the saints

in Rome. They showed forth vibrant testimonies of how God had changed their lives through the gospel (cf 16:19).

- Our faith is tangible - it can be seen & heard of through a consistent witness and godly lifestyle (1 Thess 1:6-8; Acts 11:26). The Roman church was not the fruits of Paul's labours, but that didn't matter to Paul. He rejoiced to hear of God working in them, no matter who was responsible for it (Phil 1:15-18).

(ii) *Praying for the Saints in Rome, 1:9*

- Paul remembers the Romans in unceasing prayer. What a great encouragement to the believers in Rome that the Apostle is constantly praying for them. As the believers in Rome could not know of his intense interest in their spiritual wellbeing, Paul calls upon God to attest to his heart's desire. Paul adds that he serves God "with my spirit" or, 'with my heart.' It is not mere external service but with his whole heart. Paul understood that if God is God, He deserves our very best.
- Paul was constantly praying for the church in Rome; he was actively approaching the throne of God on their behalf. He was petitioning God that in His will, he would be able to come to them in order to minister to them. It is ever a Christian privilege and duty to bear our fellow Christians at the throne of grace.

(iii) *Strengthening the Saints in Rome, 1:10-13*

- Paul has purposed for a long time to visit the believers in Rome but had been hindered thus far. No matter how strong his personal desire and how unselfish his purpose in desiring to visit Rome, Paul made his plans subject to "the will of God."
 - Even Paul had delays and frustrations with regards to the answers to his prayers. He prayed often that he might be able to go to Rome, and even often made plans to go, but thus far his plans had been frustrated.
 - Often God answers through delays or round-about ways that we do not envision when we pray. Paul would eventually make it to Rome, but he would eventually arrive there as a prisoner of the Roman Empire. The path of providence often takes unexpected turns, but is nevertheless laid out by an all-wise, sovereign God (Prov 16:9).
- We must always subject our prayers and plans to God's will and timing. If God doesn't answer exactly as we prayed or in the timing that we expected, we must still be in submission to His will (Jas 4:13-15). God's will is always perfect. Because Paul was prevented from going to Rome, God inspired him to write this epistle to instruct the Roman Christians in the doctrines of grace. In God's providence, it has led to the permanent enrichment of the whole Church and all believers in all ages (8:28).
- The purpose of Paul wanting to come to Rome is to impart "some spiritual gift," or to establish, strengthen and build up the believers in the faith. Paul felt he

could be an instrument in God's hands to help the believers grow spiritually. But he also desired that they encourage him - "That I may be comforted (strengthened or encouraged) together by the mutual faith." Paul, in his humility, is always ready to receive as well as to give. But so far Paul has been hindered from visiting them, presumably by his gospel work in other places. Paul desires to visit the Romans so that he could have the privilege of seeing some fruit in their lives from his ministry.

(iv) *Preaching the Gospel to the Saints in Rome, 1:14-15*

- The final way Paul wanted to help the Roman Christians is by preaching the gospel to them. Paul's calling as apostle to Gentiles put him under a debt or obligation to preach the gospel.
 - "Greeks" refer to those who were under the influence of Greek culture and language.
 - "Barbarians" - ie. foreigners or non-Greeks, and not referring to the savage or uncivilized (1 Cor 14:11).
 - "Wise" - the term is synonymous with the Greeks, who esteemed themselves to be wise (1 Cor 1:22).
 - "Unwise" - those who were regarded as the ignorant and unpolished.
- Paul was using (without necessarily agreeing to it) the idea of the Greeks & Romans of that day - that they were people of wisdom & knowledge and everyone else was ignorant.
- By 'Greeks and barbarians' Paul meant all nations since the Greeks viewed every non-Greek as a barbarian. By 'wise and unwise' Paul meant every level of society, from the most educated to the uneducated. In other words, every human being needs to hear the gospel because all have sinned, and Jesus is the Saviour of every sinner who will repent and believe in Him.
- Paul is ready to be preach the gospel in Rome. Paul is not only called to preach the gospel; he is eager to preach the gospel. We have a glimpse of his priority: separated unto the gospel (v1), debtor to preach it (v14), ready to preach it (v15), not ashamed to preach it (v16).