

Romans 1A

- The book of Romans is unique in the New Testament
 - A letter written by Paul, but not an epistle so much as an theological essay
 - And in reality, it's a fund-raising letter
 - Like Colossians, it's written to a group Paul has never met
 - A church he didn't found
 - Unlike Colossians, Paul's letter to the Roman church is uncharacteristically impersonal and even formal
 - Paul had virtually no personal connection to the church, and it shows in the letter
 - And although the Colossian church was at least founded by someone Paul personally converted (Epaphrus)
 - The Roman church was not been founded by any apostle, much less through Paul's influence
 - It was founded by a group of Jewish Christians traveling from Jerusalem, most likely soon after Pentecost
 - Largely remained a Jewish-influenced church
- By the time Paul wrote his letter, the Roman church was well established and renown for it's faith
 - As the church occupying the capital of the Empire, the Roman church took some measure of pride for who it was and where it was
 - And in some ways, it mirrored Paul himself
 - Paul was famous even in his own day as the chief evangelist of the church
 - And yet he was the least of the apostles
 - Roman church was famous for it's faith and hearty growth it experienced in the seat of Roman power

- Despite being the only major church established without apostolic authority
- Paul's reputation made him a sought after commodity and his presence was frequently sought by every church
 - And the Roman church saw itself to some extent as the crown jewel of Church, worthy of honor
 - Certainly worthy of Paul's attention
- And that brings us to the friction standing between this prominent apostle and this prominent church
- The first three years of Paul's missionary career took him from Damascus to Arabia
 - Then back to Damascus then to Jerusalem
 - Finally He then moved to Tarsus, his base for the next six years
 - Barnabas invited him to Antioch (Syria) for the next five years
 - Then he began his missionary journeys
 - The first was to Asia Minor for two years
 - Then Paul began his writing with Galatians
 - After the Jerusalem council, Paul goes on his second trip through Asia Minor and into Greece for two years
 - He writes Thessalonians, and then back to Syria
 - His third journey takes him to Asia Minor
 - He writes Corinthians while in Ephesus
 - And while in Corinth, he writes Romans
 - Paul returns to Jerusalem, is arrested, sent to Roman
 - Imprisoned, he writes four more epistles
 - He's freed, returns to Greece
 - Writes 1Tim and Titus

- Is arrested again and sent back to Rome
- Writes 2Tim and dies in AD 68
- You notice that by the time he writes Romans, he's already traveled through Asia Minor three times
 - He has founded multiple churches and revisited many of them
 - He has begun to pen the NT epistles directed to these churches
 - Granting them the privilege of revealing mysteries, explaining the gospel, establishing church practice
 - And yet, he's never gone farther west than Greece
 - Most notably, he's never visited the seat of power, Rome
 - And after years of waiting, the church has begun to feel slighted
 - And some have begun to suggest reasons for Paul's apparent neglect
 - Some say he is ignoring Jewish believers, as the Roman church was largely Jewish in the beginning
 - Paul was favoring the Gentiles
 - Some were saying he only cared for the churches he founded
 - Some said he was ashamed of the gospel and was afraid of confrontation with Roman authorities
 - Or perhaps the close scrutiny of learned Jewish believers rather than the ignorant Gentile converts
- Now for his part, Paul faced a challenge with the Roman church
 - He was going to visit them, finally
 - But he was going on his own terms
 - He was going to travel to Rome but only pass through on his way to Spain
 - So Rome was going to be little more than a stop over for him

- And to make matters worse, Paul planned to ask the rich Roman church for money
 - He wanted them to become the financial sponsor for a new series of church plants he planned in the western edge of the empire
- So now, as he sets out to write to this Roman church
 - A church that was to be a critical piece in Paul's next missionary focus – Western limits of the empire
- But a church saddled with wounded pride and self-importance
 - A church with a chip on it's shoulder and a grudge against Paul
- What do you say to a church you don't know, have never visited, yet desperately need?
 - Naturally, you write the single greatest theological explanation of righteousness and redemption ever penned
 - You provide the church of intellectuals a religious masterwork unrivaled by anything else in scripture or elsewhere
 - You provide a church residing at the center of the known world with a foundational treatise on the Christian faith from which the truth can spread to the world
 - And along the way, you explain your absence and your love for that church
 - And at the end, you ask for money
- Our lesson today will center on an introduction of this letter by an examination of Paul's relationship with Rome and his reason for writing this letter
 - Tyndale said Romans is the principle and most excellent part of the New Testament

- Luther said Romans is worthy not only that every Christian should know it word for word, by heart, but occupy himself with it every day, as the daily bread of the soul. It 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.
- We'll never know whether more people have been saved during a reading of Romans or one of the Gospels
 - But it's fair to assume that more believers have come to full and complete understanding of grace through the words of the Apostle Paul
 - For that reason alone, it's the most important study any believer can pursue

[Prayer]

[Rom. 1:1](#) ¶ Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God,
[Rom. 1:2](#) which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures,
[Rom. 1:3](#) concerning His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh,
[Rom. 1:4](#) 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,
[Rom. 1:5](#) through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about *the* obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for His name's sake,
[Rom. 1:6](#) among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ;
[Rom. 1:7](#) ¶ 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.

- Paul's salutation is similar to many other letters, and elements will be familiar to many of us, though this is the longest of all his letters
 - Paul identifies himself
 - He's a slave of Christ, serving the Lord without a choice or option
 - And yet with joy and personal commitment
 - And he immediately moves to a defense of his authority to teach
 - He was called to be an apostle

- Set apart to preach the Gospel
 - This testimony would have no doubt been something the Roman church remembered well
 - As a Jewish church, they probably remember too well the rampage that a certain man called Saul perpetrated against the church in Jerusalem
 - Paul says God took me off that path, but just assuredly He set me on a new mission, a mission I was obligated to pursue
 - The word apostle means one sent with a message
- Then Paul describes succinctly what that mission was: the gospel
 - It was the message promised beforehand
 - Through the prophets in the Scriptures (the OT)
 - Concerning the Son, the descendent of David by the flesh
 - Yet He was declared by the Holy Spirit to be the Son of God with power over resurrection of the dead
 - Jesus Christ the Lord
 - This opening is unique among Paul's letters because it is an overt appeal to a Jewish audience
 - Here's this self-described apostle to the Gentiles opening his letter with a Jewish frame of reference
 - Because he knew he was writing to a Jewish audience
 - And a learned Jewish believer at that
- Verse 5 Paul begin slowly building a bridge between himself at the wounded pride of the Roman church
 - He says through Jesus WE have received grace and apostleship
 - The word apostleship is apostole
 - Which is different than apostle in verse 1 (apostolos)
 - In verse 1, Paul is someone sent with a message

- But in verse 5 this Jewish church shares a common mission with Paul of apostleship – literally a sending away
 - And together they have received grace – God’s unmerited favor – in having the privilege of conveying the gospel message to others
 - And more specifically to Gentiles
- To bring about the obedience of faith among all Gentiles for Jesus’ sake
 - Among whom you all are the called
 - Paul suggests a common mission with this Jewish church
 - To be called out to reach a Gentile world
- To this group Paul says he is writing and he extends the grace of God to them
 - Paul’s brilliance is on display even in this salutation
 - Because he knows he is in damage repair mode
 - And he knows he needs to win them over
 - So he begins to appeal to their pride, at least momentarily
 - Appealing to their sense of superiority as Jewish believers
 - And then artfully drawing them to his side by describing them as sharing in his mission
 - It plays to their sense that they are above the rest of the church
 - Paul isn’t going to leave that misconception unchecked but he’s using it to his advantage for the moment
- Paul continues the charm offensive in verse 8, though his words are completely sincere and heartfelt

[Rom. 1:8](#) ¶ First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, because your faith is being proclaimed throughout the whole world.

[Rom. 1:9](#) 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,

[Rom. 1:10](#) always in my prayers making request, if perhaps now at last by the will of God I may succeed in coming to you.

[Rom. 1:11](#) For I long to see you so that I may impart some spiritual gift to you, that you may be established;

[Rom. 1:12](#) 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.

[Rom. 1:13](#) 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.

[Rom. 1:14](#) I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish.

[Rom. 1:15](#) So, for my part, I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.

[Rom. 1:16](#) ¶ 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.

- Paul says he thanks the Lord for this church
 - Because this church's faith is legendary throughout the empire
 - And that's the source of its power
 - It was a rich church, but that wasn't known for its riches
 - It was a wise and knowledge group of believers, but it wasn't famous for its knowledge
 - It was a large and growing church, but it wasn't known for its size
 - It was renown for its faith
 - For the strong belief in the gospel
 - And that testimony is serving as a light to the world
- Paul says as God is my witness, I talk you all up constantly to the other churches
 - You aren't a second-class church to me
 - I think highly of you and your work for the sake of the Gospel

- More damage control
- Moreover, Paul says his prayers are to be able to come to see them in person
 - So not only is it their desire that Paul would grace them with his presence, but he shares in their desire and prays for it
- Paul's desire is to visit them and impart a spiritual gift
 - This isn't to mean he would convey a certain gift
 - But as he clarifies in verse 12
 - Rather, his presence would enable him to edify and encourage the church in more ways, which would be a spiritual benefit or gift to the church
 - That they might be established
 - And they would be a source of help to him
 - Paul continues to place his ministry on a equal plane with the Roman church
- Back to the elephant in the room
 - Paul says in verse 13 I don't want you to be unaware (you should know), I wanted to come bear spiritual fruit with you even as I have within the Gentile church
 - He had been prevented from coming to them, though he wanted to do so
 - What prevent Paul from coming?
 - What ever prevented Paul from doing anything he wanted in ministry?
 - Only the Holy Spirit
 - What reason did God have for preventing Paul's movement toward the Roman church?
 - Paul says he was under obligation to Greeks and barbarians
 - Greeks and non-Greek Gentiles
 - To both the wise and foolish

- That last part really give us insight into how Paul is appealing to the perspective of this mature, Jewish church
 - They saw Paul spending so much time with Gentiles
 - And uneducated, barbarians at that
 - While ignoring the more spiritually mature, Jewish believers living as standard bearers in the heart of the Roman empire
- Paul says I was under compulsion, compulsion by the HS, to preach the gospel to these people rather than you
- Now this is one of absolute favorite lines in all Paul's writing
 - He says, if it were up to me, I would have come to you already
 - But God wouldn't let me, blame Him not me
 - I love this line because it's the only correct way to blame God
 - Adam wins the award for the wrong way to blame God
 - Paul defends his absence by saying he wasn't ashamed of the gospel
 - He wasn't' hesitant to bring the news of the Gospel to anyone, even to sophisticated Rome and the learned Jewish believers
 - On the contrary, it is the very power of God to save those who believe
 - The word salvation is soteria - deliverance
 - The words of the gospel hold the power to save men
 - And by extension, no other words can save men
 - Unless we deliver the gospel of Christ, we do not bring the power of God to save
 - What is required to be saved? Only believe the Gospel...no works
 - Paul says the message must go to the Jews first then the gentiles
 - First here means in all respects

- They were elected first to receive it
- They heard it first through the prophets
- They consummated it first through the birth of the Messiah into the Jewish line of David
- They it experienced it first through the preaching and life of Messiah on Earth
- They rejected it first through the crucifixion
- They have delivered it first through the Jewish Apostles
- And now they establish it first through the Jewish church that originated in Jerusalem and moved outward
- And then Paul and others brought the message to the Gentiles next
 - He explains his methodology as given by God
 - First the Jews, but always onto the Gentiles
- Then in verse 17 Paul delivers his theme for the rest of the letter
 - His topic sentence of the doctrinal essay that follows
 - Before we dive in, let's complete the thought on why Paul is writing

[Rom. 15:14](#) ¶ And concerning you, my brethren, I myself also am convinced that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able also to admonish one another.

[Rom. 15:15](#) But I have written very boldly to you on some points so as to remind you again, because of the grace that was given me from God,

[Rom. 15:16](#) to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, ministering as a priest the gospel of God, so that *my* offering of the Gentiles may become acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

[Rom. 15:17](#) Therefore in Christ Jesus I have found reason for boasting in things pertaining to God.

[Rom. 15:18](#) For I will not presume to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me, resulting in the obedience of the Gentiles by word and deed,

[Rom. 15:19](#) in the power of signs and wonders, in the power of the Spirit; so that from Jerusalem and round about as far as Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.

- At this point, the most stunning theological essay is complete, and Paul has returned to the readers to explain his motive in writing
 - But unlike at the beginning, Paul now has their attention and presumably their appreciation
 - He's blown them away with an intellectual feast of spiritual truth that both uplifted them and humbled them
 - And it gave them something they could truly appreciate
 - Paul had saved his best for them
 - And in chapters 12-14, Paul spoke of righteousness lived out in the life of a Christian
 - So now Paul says as far as you go, I am convinced you are full of goodness
 - By goodness, Paul means moral excellence
 - This church had developed itself outside apostolic instruction and leadership
 - And they had done so admirably
 - They had achieved an remarkable state of moral excellence and exemplary faith
 - And they were able to admonish (instruct) one another
 - In stark contrast to the church mentioned in Heb 5
- In verses 15- Paul returns to his defense for waiting so long to write and come to them
 - Paul was first and foremost an apostle to Gentiles and he must focus on Gentile conversion
 - It was his only mission and only boast
 - The massive gentile conversion and reception of the gospel was almost hard to believe and impossible to ignore
 - And it stood as a testimony of God's work through Paul

- And his boast validated his ministry decisions
 - To work patiently in the area between Jerusalem and Illyricum (Albania)
 - An area from east to the border of Rome
 - Paul preached the gospel

[Rom. 15:20](#) And thus I aspired to preach the gospel, not where Christ was *already* named, so that I would not build on another man's foundation;

[Rom. 15:21](#) but as it is written,

"THEY WHO HAD NO NEWS OF HIM SHALL SEE,
AND THEY WHO HAVE NOT HEARD SHALL UNDERSTAND."

[Rom. 15:22](#) ¶ For this reason I have often been prevented from coming to you;

[Rom. 15:23](#) but now, with no further place for me in these regions, and since I have had for many years a longing to come to you

[Rom. 15:24](#) whenever I go to Spain—for I hope to see you in passing, and to be helped on my way there by you, when I have first enjoyed your company for a while—

[Rom. 15:25](#) but now, I am going to Jerusalem serving the saints.

- So, Paul says, I made my goal to preach the gospel where it wasn't, not where it was already
 - He wasn't appointed to build on another man's foundation
 - We each have a focus and purpose in ministry
 - Some plant another waters
 - Paul was a planter by calling
 - And it was done to fulfill scriptures promise that Gentiles would hear and believe the gospel (Isa 52)
- This is why I was prevented
 - Because I had a different mission
 - But now the region has been covered, time to move on
 - What a testimony – Paul preached everywhere
 - So now I can come to you
 - But look how bold Paul is
 - He says I come to you on my way to Spain

- And I want you to help fund my work in Spain
 - And before I get to you, I need to go back to Jerusalem one last time
 - And then he says why

[Rom. 15:26](#) For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem.

[Rom. 15:27](#) Yes, they were pleased *to do so*, and they are indebted to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in their spiritual things, they are indebted to minister to them also in material things.

[Rom. 15:28](#) Therefore, when I have finished this, and have put my seal on this fruit of theirs, I will go on by way of you to Spain.

[Rom. 15:29](#) I know that when I come to you, I will come in the fullness of the blessing of Christ.

[Rom. 15:30](#) ¶ Now I urge you, brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God for me,

[Rom. 15:31](#) that I may be rescued from those who are disobedient in Judea, and *that* my service for Jerusalem may prove acceptable to the saints;

[Rom. 15:32](#) so that I may come to you in joy by the will of God and find *refreshing* rest in your company.

[Rom. 15:33](#) Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen.

- Paul carries a donation for the relatively poor Jerusalem church from the wealthy Gentile churches in Asia Minor
 - And it was proper for them to do so
 - For they were spiritually indebted to the Jews, therefore they should become materially indebted
 - Having finished that work, Paul will go to Spain by way of them
 - He asks them to pray for his work in Jerusalem for the disobedient (the unbelieving Jews)
 - Believing Jews see unbelieving Jews as disobedient
- This is Paul's purpose of writing this epistle
 - To establish a new base in Rome for spreading the gospel to a new region of Gentiles
 - And he boldly enlists their help for his mission, despite their likely irritation over his past ignoring of their church