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2012 Romans 1:1-17 Commentary

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*Section 1. God's Righteousness and Man's Unrighteousness—mankind's problem,
Romans 1-3*

Chapter 1

Foundations for ministry, God's righteousness and faith in the gospel, rejection of God's revelation.

Main applications: 1. what is a bond slave, 2. Jesus Christ the Lord, God's son, 3. prayer for those in our ministries, 4. mental attitude for ministry, 5. the gospel—salvation by faith and living by faith, 6. rejection of God who is revealed in creation results in judgment.

The main so whats? for application in verses 1-13 include 1. The apostles were unique, but God also puts believers in service and gifts them for that service, 2. Jesus Christ the Lord is God's eternal son who took on humanity in David's line for us--Messiah, Redeemer, King, and fulfillment of prophecy, 3. the resurrection is a momentous event in the life of Jesus and demonstrates that he really is the unique person we can believe in, 4. do we pray for those in our own ministries? 5. do we want to be a source of spiritual benefit to those to whom we minister?

1. The apostle Paul, servant of Christ Jesus, writes to Roman believers about the gospel, which was promised through the prophets and is about God's son born in David's line and marked out as holy by resurrection (Romans 1:1-7).
 - 1.1. Paul opens this letter by saying three things about himself. He is Christ's **bond-servant** (*doulos*, *δουλος* slave, one subject to another; not simply a servant). Slavery was very widespread in the world at that time. A person became a slave by birth, by capture in war, by selling himself, or by purchase. In the Old Testament God's men were willing servants of the Lord. Paul was subject to Christ Jesus and also a willing servant of the Lord. (See the doctrine of bond servant or slave). He was also an apostle (*apostolos*, *αποστολος*, messenger, envoy, naval commander) with the authority and ministry that goes with that gift. An apostle and the church prophets were unique people chosen and gifted to be part of the foundation of the church (Ephesians 2:20; 4:11-12). (See the doctrine of Apostle). The apostles ministered with the Lord (Acts 1:21-22); were called one of the twelve (1 Corinthians 15:5); Paul was unique in that the Lord appeared to him on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1-7) and appointed him an apostle, though he did not know the Lord during the Lord's earthly ministry (Romans 11:13; Galatians 1:1; 2:11-12; 1 Corinthians 15:8); and 1 Corinthians 15:7-9 seem to indicate that Paul was the last of the chosen apostles. The tone

of Scripture indicates that apostles, prophets, and the other temporary signifying ceased after the first century, and Scripture indicates that apostles especially had and used the temporary sign gifts and we have no evidence that people have these gifts today (Romans 15:17-29; Hebrews 2:3-4; 2 Corinthians 12:12). Most cults and aberrant ministries have begun with people who claim to be apostles or prophets and who claim to have great authority from God. There are no apostles today (nor prophets in the NT sense of the word) nor any Christian with authority anything like the apostles' authority. Paul was **set apart** (*aphorizō*, ἀφορίζω perfect passive participle, to separate, to mark off, select from a group) to present and defend the gospel (Romans 1:1). The same word and idea is in Acts 13:2 and Galatians 1:15. All believers are in a very true sense God's bond slaves, separated for service to God, and are spiritually gifted for ministry. See the teaching file slides—biblical doctrine of spiritual gifts, ministry, how to know my spiritual gift.

- 1.2. The **gospel** (εὐαγγέλιον the reward of good news and then simply good news) is the message of forgiveness and everlasting life—salvation—through the person and work of Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 15:1-4; 1 Timothy 1:15-16) and gained by faith in Jesus Christ. Righteousness and therefore everlasting salvation is present in the Old Testament (Romans 1:2), though not in the complete details that the New Testament gives. See 1 Peter 1:10-11; Luke 24:26, 27; Acts 10:43; 26:6; and Titus 1:2. Three important Scriptures that teach that faith is not a work and is the link to having righteousness credited to a person are Genesis 15:6, John 6:26-29, and Romans 4:1-8. See teaching file slides: the doctrines of salvation—two, salvation—three tenses, salvation unity, reconciliation, believe or not believe.
- 1.3. The gospel is about God's son, Jesus Christ our Lord (Romans 1:3-4). He became humanity from (ἐκ=ek, from, out from, by) the seed of David and was marked out the powerful eternal Son of God by (ἐκ=ek, from, out from, by) the resurrection. These verses inform us about Jesus' relationship to humanity and to God. Paul emphasizes Jesus' humanity and eternal sonship with evidence: Jesus birth and Jesus' resurrection after dying for sins. Second Corinthians 13:4 has a similar construction, crucified ek, lives ek.
 - 1.3.1. He became or *was born* (γίνομαι ginomai) from or by the seed of David, according to the flesh—humanity (Matthew 1:1; John 7:41 and others). Luke 2:7 records his birth. He had human characteristics such as hunger (Matthew 4:2), physical exhaustion (John 4:6), emotion (John 11:35), and tests (Hebrews 4:15). He died (Mark 15:37-38) and arose from the dead (Mark 16:6). Hebrews 1:4 says he is better than angels; Hebrews 1:5 calls him God's son; Hebrews 1:6 calls him the firstborn (Not born first, others were born before him, but he is the unique, special, honored one. See Psalm 89:27 and Exodus 4:32) and angels worshipped him; and Hebrews 1:8 calls him God.
 - 1.3.2. He was marked out (ὀρίζω orizo mark out, declare, designate out) as God's eternal son, Jesus Christ our Lord, (who is holy—spirit of holiness) from or by the resurrection. The resurrection demonstrated his divine ability-nature (John 2:19-22). Jesus Christ our Lord was man and God. His

resurrection declared (modifies, marks out, or declares) his holy sonship. Note his names and titles: Jesus, the human name; Christ, his title and function; Lord, his God name. Philippians 2:5-8 is a central passage that teaches that he is God and man. In summary, John 1, Colossians 1, Philippians 2, and Hebrews 1 teach the deity and humanity of Jesus Christ. MTF Doctrine of Christ—deity and humanity, Christology summary, doctrines of hypostatic union and kenosis. *"A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse."* (CS Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, page 41)

- 1.4. *περὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ* concerning his son
- ***τοῦ γενομένου who was born***
 - ***ἐκ σπέρματος Δαβὶδ of a descendent of David***
 - ***κατὰ σάρκα, according to the flesh***
 - ***τοῦ ὀρισθέντος υἱοῦ θεοῦ ἐν δυνάμει who was declared the son of God with power***
 - ***κατὰ πνεῦμα ἁγιωσύνης according to the spirit of holiness***
 - ***ἐξ ἀναστάσεως νεκρῶν by the resurrection from the dead***
 - Son
 - ❖ *became (ginomai, γίνομαι aorist middle participle in simple apposition to son) as in Galatians 4:4*
 - ❖ *from seed (sperma, σπέρμα) of David*
 - ❖ *according to the flesh*
 - *designated son of God with power (orizō, ὀρίζω aorist passive participle, appoint, designate, declare, simple apposition to son)*
 - *from the resurrection of dead*
 - *according to or in keeping with his holy human spirit.*
- 1.5. Romans 1:5 complements Romans 1:1 concerning Paul's apostleship. Paul received grace and apostleship so that Gentiles would obey (do what is necessary—believe the gospel) the gospel by faith. The apostles were given God's grace or enabling ability and spiritual gifts when they were given the specific appointment to be apostles. Note that Paul is serving Jesus Christ the Lord (Romans 1:4).
- 1.6. Paul greets the Roman believers in Romans 1:6. They are called (***κλητός kletos, called, invited, summoned***)—designating those who are believers because they responded by faith to the gospel message call and are therefore noted as called ones. See Romans 8:30.
- 1.7. Romans 1:7. Beloved, and saints. The New Testament says that all believers in Christ are saints (1 Corinthians 1:2 and others). Paul then expresses grace

(χάρις, charis in Paul's introductions refers to divine favor; Hebrew חֵן hen. The Bible presents grace for everlasting life, grace for living, and grace for dying (MTF) and peace (εἰρήνη eirene a state of harmony or well being. Hebrew שָׁלוֹם shalom) from the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. God possess grace and peace (MTF), and Paul wants the Romans to experience God's grace and peace in life. "Grace and peace," are found thirteen times in the New Testament. In this usage it is a greeting and expression of desired blessing on believers. Believers can appreciate and experience God's free favor and God's spiritual welfare and harmony in our lives—with him and with other believers based upon Jesus' death and resurrection (Romans 3:24; Colossians 1:20; Romans 1.7; 2 Corinthians 1.2; Philemon 3 and others). This is repeated in all of Paul's epistles. See Romans 1:7, 1 Corinthians 1:3, 2 Corinthians 1:2, Galatians 1:3, Ephesians 1:2, Philippians 1:2, Colossians 1:2, 1 Thessalonians 1:1, 2 Thessalonians 1:2, 1 Timothy 1:2, 2 Timothy 1:2, Titus 1:4, Philemon 3. Peter also expresses grace and peace (1 Peter 1:2, 2 Peter 1:2). John wishes the same (2 John 3, Revelation 1:4).

2. Paul thanks God for the Roman believers and prays to visit them so he may establish them in the faith, encourage himself and them, and bear spiritual fruit, (Romans 1:8-13).

2.1. Romans 1:8-10. Paul thanks God because their faith in Christ has become known throughout the Roman world, and he prays often for them (Romans 1:8-10). Notice the main points here. 1. The Roman believers' faith was widely known—not hidden—and Paul thanked God for that. 2. Paul prayed through Jesus Christ, which means Jesus made prayer possible and effective. Jesus was and is the mediator between God and mankind. This provided reconciliation and the present spiritual life privileges of which prayer is one (1 Timothy 2:5-6; Ephesians 2:16-18; Hebrews 4:14-16; Hebrews 10:19-25; and many others). 3. Paul's ministry or service was genuine ("in my spirit"), not just going through the motions. 4. His purpose was to minister the gospel of God's son. The city of Rome was a difficult place for Christians at this time. Nero was the emperor (54-68 AD). For an interesting list and other information on the Roman emperors see <http://www.thepaolas.com/Emperors/emperors.html>. Paul prays that God will send him to Rome.

2.2. Romans 1:11-13. Paul wants to 1. give them spiritual benefit (*charisma*, χάρισμα, a favor bestowed, a gift) by using his spiritual gifts and 2. so establish and build them in the faith ("that you may be established," στεριζῶ *sterizō*, to fix firmly, confirm, establish, strengthen, aorist passive infinitive; see Romans 16:25; 1 Thessalonians 3:2, 13; 2 Thessalonians 3:3; James 5:8; Luke 9:51; 2 Peter 1:12), 3. that Paul and the Roman believers will be an encouragement to each other (Romans 1:12), and 4. Paul wants to bear fruit (καρπὸς *karpos*, some result, fruit) in his ministry for them—that what he does will have godly results (Romans 1:13). Here we can recall John 15:1-5 where Jesus taught that believers bear fruit when they abide in him. Remember Paul's purpose in ministry to believers was to equip the saints (Ephesians 4:11-16; Philippians

1:25-26, 3:12-18; Colossians 1:28, 4:17; 1 Thessalonians 5:11-14; 2 Corinthians 4:1, 5:18, 12:19). See ministry MTF and spiritual gifts.

3. The gospel, which reveals God's righteousness, has captured Paul's life—he is obligated, eager, and not ashamed—because it is God's power for salvation by faith for Jew and Gentile (Romans 1:14-17).

3.1. The apostle's attitude about the gospel. Paul further outlines his desire to serve the Lord by saying that he is under **obligation** (*opheiletēs*, οφειλετης Romans 1:14)—he is in debt to God and to people; and he is **eager** (*prothumos*, προθυμος Romans 1:15)—he is ready and willing; and he is **not ashamed** of the gospel (*epaischunomai*, `επαισχυνομαι Romans 1:16)—the gospel is the best news there is and so instead of shame or embarrassment he is bold and confident to tell others God's good news. God's gospel is powerful to bring salvation (forgiveness and everlasting life) to everyone who believes it (Romans 1:1, 16). The gospel is a life giving message. Though we are not apostles, we also ought to have this attitude about the gospel. The gospel has also been the driving force behind many humanitarian reforms: William Wilberforce (1759-1833) and John Newton (1725-1807), worked to abolish the slave trade; George Mueller (1805-1898), the Bristol orphanage and Christian schools; the pro-life movement; the original Ivy League colleges; missionaries, William Barclay (1761-1834) in India; Adoniram Judson (1788-1850) in Burma; Charles Thomas (CT) Studd (1862-1931) in China, India, and Africa; and many other good works throughout Christian history.

3.1.1. What is the gospel? The **gospel** (*εὐαγγέλιον* the reward of good news and then simply good news) is the message of forgiveness and everlasting life—salvation—through Jesus Christ's substitutionary death for the sins of the world, and this salvation is gained by faith in Jesus Christ for that salvation. Central passages include 1 Corinthians 15:3-4, Romans 6:23, Ephesians 2:1-9, and 1 Timothy 1:15-16. John 3 (Nicodemus), John 4 (Samaritan woman), John 11 (Martha), John 20 (Thomas), and Acts 16 (Philippian jailer) record the proclamation of the gospel to individuals and the faith response.

3.2. Romans 1:17, The gospel reveals God's righteousness. God's nature is righteous and his action is righteous when he forgives sin and grants everlasting life to a believer. This is because God judged sin on Jesus. "In it" ἐν αὐτῷ refers back to gospel. Revealed is ἀποκαλύπτω *apokalupto* to reveal, uncover, bring to light, make fully known. The gospel reveals, explains, and illustrates God's righteousness—that he is righteous and what he does in granting forgiveness and everlasting life is righteous. Believers in Christ can rest assured that sin has been paid and God maintains his own righteousness. Illustrations of the use of "revealed" include Luke 7:30; 1 Corinthians 3:13; 2 Thessalonians 2:3. Romans 1:18 also uses this word in the form, aorist passive indicative. Note the progression: in Romans 1:17, God's righteousness is revealed in the gospel. Romans 1:18, God's wrath is revealed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness.

3.2.1. There have been many interpretations of the phrase, "the righteousness of God." The word righteousness is *dikaioσunē*, δικαιοσυνη=justice, the

quality or state of judicial responsibility, judicial correctness, the quality of right behavior or righteousness. "Of God" is the possessive genitive meaning what God is and has. The phrase occurs five times in the Romans (Romans 1:17; 3:5, 21, 22; 10:3) and once in 2 Corinthians 5:21. In all five Romans uses the meaning refers to God's own righteousness—what God is, what he has, and what he gives and does. I will list three main views. **1.** God's attribute, he is righteous and he is just, which is true; **2.** God's action is righteous to declare one righteous who believes the gospel, which is also true; **3.** A person's righteous status because God justified him by faith, which is also a true doctrine. In this context the intended meaning is probably a combination of 1 and 2: the gospel reveals God's righteousness because God judged sin on Jesus. **Therefore God's nature is righteous and his action is righteous when he forgives sin and grants everlasting life to a believer. The gospel is good news about forgiveness of sin and granting everlasting life. God does not overlook sin. If he overlooks sin he would not be righteous. God paid the penalty for sin through the substitutionary death of his son, Jesus Christ. Since sin has now been paid for, God is able to forgive it and grant everlasting life to every person who believes the gospel. He is righteous to do this. This is mankind's only solution to sin and death.**

- 3.3. "from faith to faith" refers to every time a person believes God. Paul probably has salvation faith primarily in mind here, yet both salvation and the Christian life are by faith according to Paul's theology. See Ephesians 2:8-9, Galatians 2:20, 2 Corinthians 5:7, Hebrews 11:6, and others. This same structure is found in Psalm 84:7, "They go from strength to strength," 2 Corinthians 2:16, "to the one an aroma from death to death, to the other an aroma from life to life," and 2 Corinthians 3:18, "into the same image from glory to glory."
- 3.4. Paul then quotes Habakkuk 2:4 "But the righteous will live by faith," to support the fact that faith is all important. Habakkuk means living a righteous life by faith in God's word, and **Paul simply uses Habakkuk's words to stress that faith on mankind's part is necessary to receive salvation.**
- 3.5. Martin Luther struggled with God because Luther was fixed on God as judge. Luther understood dikaiosune, righteousness, as justice which condemns. He knew that no one could measure up to God's standard and so was helpless to satisfy God—God was just to condemn mankind. Luther tried and tried, yet could find no way to escape this just condemnation until he realized that God paid the penalty for sin and that God is righteous to grant salvation to anyone who accepts by faith that provision. God's justice is satisfied.

<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1519luther-tower.asp>

Modern History Sourcebook:

Martin Luther:

The Tower Experience, 1519

Martin Luther Discovers the True Meaning of Righteousness

An Excerpt From: Preface to the Complete Edition of Luther's Latin Works (1545) by Dr. Martin Luther, 1483-1546 Translated by Bro. Andrew Thornton, OSB from the "Vorrede

zu Band I der Opera Latina der Wittenberger Ausgabe. 1545" in vol. 4 of *Luthers Werke in Auswahl*, ed. Otto Clemen, 6th ed., (Berlin: de Gruyter. 1967). pp. 421-428.

Meanwhile in that same year, 1519, I had begun interpreting the Psalms once again. I felt confident that I was now more experienced, since I had dealt in university courses with St. Paul's Letters to the Romans, to the Galatians, and the Letter to the Hebrews. I had conceived a burning desire to understand what Paul meant in his Letter to the Romans, but thus far there had stood in my way, not the cold blood around my heart, but that one word which is in chapter one: "The justice of God is revealed in it." I hated that word, "justice of God," which, by the use and custom of all my teachers, I had been taught to understand philosophically as referring to formal or active justice, as they call it, i.e., that justice by which God is just and by which he punishes sinners and the unjust.

But I, blameless monk that I was, felt that before God I was a sinner with an extremely troubled conscience. I couldn't be sure that God was appeased by my satisfaction. I did not love, no, rather I hated the just God who punishes sinners. In silence, if I did not blaspheme, then certainly I grumbled vehemently and got angry at God. I said, "Isn't it enough that we miserable sinners, lost for all eternity because of original sin, are oppressed by every kind of calamity through the Ten Commandments? Why does God heap sorrow upon sorrow through the Gospel and through the Gospel threaten us with his justice and his wrath?" This was how I was raging with wild and disturbed conscience. I constantly badgered St. Paul about that spot in Romans 1 and anxiously wanted to know what he meant.

I meditated night and day on those words until at last, by the mercy of God, I paid attention to their context: "The justice of God is revealed in it, as it is written: 'The just person lives by faith.'" I began to understand that in this verse the justice of God is that by which the just person lives by a gift of God, that is by faith. I began to understand that this verse means that the justice of God is revealed through the Gospel, but it is a passive justice, i.e. that by which the merciful God justifies us by faith, as it is written: "The just person lives by faith." All at once I felt that I had been born again and entered into paradise itself through open gates. Immediately I saw the whole of Scripture in a different light. I ran through the Scriptures from memory and found that other terms had analogous meanings, e.g., the work of God, that is, what God works in us; the power of God, by which he makes us powerful; the wisdom of God, by which he makes us wise; the strength of God, the salvation of God, the glory of God.

I exalted this sweetest word of mine, "the justice of God," with as much love as before I had hated it with hate. This phrase of Paul was for me the very gate of paradise. Afterward I read Augustine's "On the Spirit and the Letter," in which I found what I had not dared hope for. I discovered that he too interpreted "the justice of God" in a similar way, namely, as that with which God clothes us when he justifies us. Although Augustine had said it imperfectly and did not explain in detail how God imputes justice to us, still it pleased me that he taught the justice of God by which we are justified. Martin Luther, 1519.

- 3.6. **Primary teachings for application.** (MTF Reconciliation, Eternal salvation—kinds, tenses, and unity, Lordship-Discipleship salvation).
- 3.6.1. God is just and righteous when he forgives sinners and credits righteousness to them. This is true because sin was not ignored, but paid for by Jesus Christ on the cross (John 1:29; Romans 1:16-17; 2 Corinthians 5:19-21; Hebrews 7:27; 9:26-28; 10:10, 12).
- 3.6.2. Everlasting salvation is by grace through faith (Romans 1:16-17; Ephesians 2:8-9; Galatians 2:16; Titus 3:5-7; 1 Timothy 1:15-16; John 3:16; John 20:31).
- 3.6.3. The Christian life is lived by grace through faith (Galatians 2:20; 2 Corinthians 5:7; 1 Corinthians 15:10; Hebrews 11:6).