

**Romans Intro.....Today we embark on a study of the New Testament Book of Romans. We're going to have quite the dialogue about this exquisite work of the Apostle (Paul) because it has more to do with shaping the Christian faith as we know it than any other book in the Bible. I think if a survey was taken among Christians not only would the Book of Romans probably be the most widely read, but we would find that more commentaries have been written on Romans than any other Bible book. The main value of Romans for a Believer is as a source of inspiration, theological instruction, and practical application.**

**However The first thing to know about Romans is that it is no different than any other book of the Bible in the respect that it is but one part of a much larger whole. Romans is not a Bible unto itself nor is it a self-contained systematic theology that Paul created. Romans is only truly intelligible when we have the rest of the Bible to provide the foundation and texture for what Paul has to say. And (I can't say this strongly enough) we must always evaluate what Paul is teaching in light of what Christ taught AND IN ACCORD WITH THE REST OF SCRIPTURE... Rest assured that there is always the one constant will be that Jesus is the Messiah; He is the Son of God and He is God. And other than by Him and His sacrifice on the cross, there is no way for anyone to be delivered from sin.**

**Sometimes we mistakenly think God dropped the Bible out of the air ...and whola now we have his word....no so...It took three hundred years after the resurrection of Jesus before the Bible in its final form came to be the Bible we possess today.**

**The Bible is God's message to man, sixty six books penned over 1600 years by forty authors as the Spirit of God moved them, in unity with each other telling one story. The story of creation, and Redemption..and God's purpose in it;**

- **But God uses people to accomplish his will...Flawed people, who are busily engaged in their own lives..in which he interrupts their plans their world views, their lifestyles and say come follow me...come learn as you go...come do what you have never done before....go through never what you thought you would....for I have a plan for you....**

**those forty people who penned the words of our Bible as the Spirit of God directed them...were in many ways no different than you and I. They have their stories their Testimonies...their struggles their triumphs...and God often left them to their desicions on how to proceed in doing what he called them to....**

and Paul is no different...so before we begin the study of what he wrote ...we need to study the man himself...

- **Barnabas and Paul healed a crippled man in Lyconia and the people claimed they must be gods...**

*KJV Acts 14:14 Which when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard of, they rent their clothes, and ran in among the people, crying out, <sup>15</sup> And saying, Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein....*

*KJV James 5:17 Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months.*

**What we're going to see in Romans is Paul working out a very sticky cultural and theological problem; the participation of gentiles within the early community of Jewish Believers that as of that time still operated as a sect of Judaism.**

- **In short: Paul was a Jew who only knew life experiences as a Jew; he was not a gentile who experienced a gentile life nor at some point did he come to identify with gentiles. by changing his lifestyle...**

**Paul's call to the Gentiles...was given him by Jesus...and that is where we will start... Christ, Himself, had appointed Paul to the office in Damascus as recorded in Acts chapter 9),**

*Acts 9: 3 As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. <sup>4</sup> He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" <sup>5</sup> "Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked. "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied. <sup>6</sup> "Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."*

- **and how does God relay this call? by a guy who thinks God is making a mistake...**

*Acts 9:15 But the Lord said to Ananias, "Go! This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the **Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel.** <sup>16</sup> I will show him how much he must suffer for my name."*

- **The Lord said I am going to use this man to proclaim my name and all that means to Gentiles....and to Jews**

- **So the dialogue the words he uses in speaking to Gentiles come from a Jewish mind set... this apostle to the Gentiles is precisely Paul the "Hebrew of Hebrews" and zealous Pharisee...now converted**
- **but Paul remained a full-fledged Jew in every way after his turning to Christ, and so it logically follows is that Paul will dialogue with the Gentiles from the perspective of a Jewish Rabbi...**

**He was not given a manual on how to do this...think of that learning curve... that would be like asking the excons in here that your ministry will be at police conferences..**

- **Paul was a Rabbi, having graduated from Gamaliel's Rabbinical school. In fact he belonged to one of the strictest sects of Judaism, the Pharisees.**

**This is something that he readily admitted to, and stated for the record in Acts 26 that he remained a Pharisee; this statement was made some years after writing the letter to the Romans.**

*Acts 26:4* “The Jewish people all know the way **I have lived ever since I was a child**, from the beginning of my life in my own country, and also in Jerusalem. <sup>5</sup> They have known me for a long time and can testify, if they are willing, that **I conformed to the strictest sect of our religion, living as a Pharisee.** <sup>6</sup> And now it is because of my hope in what God has promised our ancestors that I am on trial today. <sup>7</sup> This is the promise our twelve tribes are hoping to see fulfilled **as they earnestly serve God day and night.**

- **In fact in Acts 24, as he stood before Governor Felix, he plainly said that he also remained committed to the Law (something that was mandatory if one was to maintain their Jewishness).**

*Acts 24:11* You can easily verify that no more than twelve days ago I went up to Jerusalem to worship. <sup>12</sup> My accusers did not find me arguing with anyone at the temple, or stirring up a crowd in the synagogues or anywhere else in the city. <sup>13</sup> And they cannot prove to you the charges they are now making against me. <sup>14</sup> However, I admit that I worship the God of our ancestors as a follower of the Way, which they call a sect. I believe everything that is in accordance with the Law and that is written in the Prophets,

*And verse*

<sup>18</sup> I was ceremonially clean when they found me in the temple courts doing this. There was no crowd with me, nor was I involved in any disturbance.

- **Listen to what Paul said about himself...**

**Acts 26:5.....I conformed to the strictest sect of our religion, living as a Pharisee... What does being a Pharisee mean?**

- Paul was a Diaspora Jew whose first language was Greek, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, the Jews (believing and not) in Rome (to whom the letter was written) would have spoken Greek. He also received an excellent secular education in this world renown city know for it quality Higher learning.
- **Nevertheless Paul identified with mainstream Judaism (let's call it Rabbinic Judaism to give it a clearer picture).** I say that because the ordinary common Jews of the holy land and those of the Diaspora can't really be called adherents to Rabbinic Judaism; that connection occurs mainly with those who fancied being religious experts (like the Pharisees).
- The common Jewish folk would not have identified themselves with any specific Jewish party. Thus we don't find ordinary Jews saying that they are Pharisees.
- In fact Paul was part of a specific strand of Rabbinic Judaism that was espoused by, and taught by, the highly acclaimed teacher Gamaliel.
- Paul expressly came to live in Jerusalem in order to be taught by Gamaliel. The Talmud makes it clear that Gamaliel only took students who had exceptional aptitude and devotion, and who showed promise such that one day they could become rabbis.
- We don't have to conjecture in any way about Paul in this regard; he calls himself a Pharisee, and his training at Gamaliel's school is a recorded fact.
- When his training was complete he didn't graduate as a novice or an intern; but rather as one having mastered the philosophy and nuances of this particular strand of Judaism. Paul was a rabbi through and through.
- **Although in Paul's schooling studying the Biblical Torah and the Prophets was certainly part of his training, in reality what was taught were the theological views of Gamaliel about the Torah and the Prophets.**
- **Further this particular strand of Rabbinical Judaism that Gamaliel followed operated within a set of doctrines that we commonly call Jewish Law. In Hebrew this is called Halakhah.**
- **These Jewish laws were NOT the same thing as the Torah Law (the Law of Moses) called in Hebrew mitzvot. Rather these Jewish laws were essentially manmade rulings and doctrines (Jesus called them Traditions of the Elders) purported to accurately reflect the true interpretation of the Law of Moses and the Prophets.**
- **These rulings and doctrines established a system of behaviors and customs and theological expectations that those who adhered to the Gamaliel rabbinic philosophy (those like Paul) believed in and followed scrupulously.**

**Paul's theology revolved around the Halakhah of the Pharisees; in fact it was the Halakhah of a specific brand of Pharisees as championed by Gamaliel (and it did not always agree with the Halakhah of the other brands of Pharisees), Thus when Paul thinks, speaks, writes and instructs he does so with the underlying foundation of the Halakhah he learned at the feet of Gamaliel.**

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**2) This is what Paul bought into Jesus>>>Just like you and I bring ourselves and life into Jesus...**

**Now after meeting his Messiah on the road to Damascus, Paul began assimilating a new Halakhah; the Halakhah taught by Yeshua of Nazareth. Remember: Halakhah is but a certain group's interpretation of the Bible.**

- So Paul was adopting Jesus's interpretation of the Bible that would become intertwined with his established Halakhah taught by Gamaliel. Much aligned and much didn't

**So Paul's dilemma was this: Yeshua told him that he was to be the emissary of this new Halakhah to the gentiles. And the core of Christ's Halakhah was the Gospel.**

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**3)The problem is that there was no school to teach this because Yeshua was now in Heaven, and because Messianic Judaism was far too young and embattled to have formed schools.**

**There was no precedent in Jewish history for offering salvation to gentiles based on faith in the covenants God made with the Hebrews.**

**So Paul had to think it through to come to some principles and conclusions and to establish solutions and methods to go by. This took time and Experience...**

- **He spent three years there...growing in power...to face his first big test of suffering! until he gained enough strength to endure his first trial...**

*Acts 9: 23 After many days (three years) had gone by, there was a conspiracy among the Jews to kill him, 24 but Saul learned of their plan. Day and night they kept close watch on the city gates in order to kill him. 25 But his followers took him by night and lowered him in a basket through an opening in the wall.*

*then he spent another 14 years in relative obscurity apart from the religious leaders in Jerusalem...Training and learning and ministering...much of it with Barnabas*

*Gal 2:2 Then after fourteen years, I went up again to Jerusalem, this time with Barnabas. I took Titus along also. 2 I went in response to a revelation and, meeting privately with those esteemed as leaders, I presented to them the gospel that I preach*

*among the Gentiles. I wanted to be sure I was not running and had not been running my race in vain.*

### **17 years later... then enters into his Apostolic role in greater measure**

**However...He recognized he was called before he ever was aware of it!**

*Gal 1:15 But when God, who set me apart from my mother's womb and called me by his grace, was pleased 16 to reveal his Son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles, my immediate response was not to consult any human being.*

- **God had set him apart from birth...which means he had made the decision before he was born. no consultation with humans about the call**
- **Which means his whole life was included in the call...amazing**
- **His response was to trust Jesus ...not consulting any man...I think that was a wise move...all the people whom he would have consulted would not be in favor of this!!**
- **Paul writes this letter to the Roman church in probably 57 AD which would make him 23 years into his walk with Jesus**

**In other words, from Paul's perspective, he (as a rabbi) was establishing Christ centered Halakhah; and all that entailed.**

**Which he did not get a blue print on doing...as he says in Ephesians**

*Eph 3 :<sup>2</sup> Surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you, <sup>3</sup> that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly. <sup>4</sup> In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, <sup>5</sup> which was not made known to people in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets. <sup>6</sup> This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.*

**not only does he have to flesh out this mystery in actual practice...this letter to the Romans it is even more challenging he is writing to a church...located in the heart of the world's system of the day Rome...to a people he has never met...to a church he did not found...which was founded by other Jews who also had a heart for Gentiles...**

**So what does all of this mean for us and our study of Romans?. We're going to go where the Scriptures lead even when it troubles us and we don't like it. we're going to open up a few cans of worms and some will no doubt escape.**

**All along the way, no matter how challenging or uncomfortable this may get, rest assured that the one constant will be that Jesus is the Messiah; He is the Son of God and He is God. And other than by Him and His sacrifice on the cross, there is no way for anyone to be delivered from sin.**

**this could be summed up in his words in chapter 1**

*Romans 1: <sup>14</sup> I am obligated both to Greeks and non-Greeks, both to the wise and the foolish. <sup>15</sup> That is why I am so eager to preach the gospel also to you who are in Rome. <sup>16</sup> For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile. <sup>17</sup> For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: “The righteous will live by faith.*

**you may not know how to do many thing as a disciple of Christ...but you ought to know this! and this**

*Luke 12:11 “When you are brought before synagogues, rulers and authorities, do not worry about how you will defend yourselves or what you will say, <sup>12</sup> for the Holy Spirit will teach you at that time what you should say.” end*

end

- **For centuries (although much more so in modern times), training centers/seminaries for the future leaders of Christianity have operated the same way as these ancient rabbinical schools.**
- **In both the cases of Judaism and Christianity while the Bible is highly venerated the Bible is viewed through the lens of that denomination's doctrines and not the other way around. So although the student might not be fully conscious of it, what they wind up gaining is the greatest knowledge of, and devotion to, the**

ways that a board of religious scholars and elders long ago decided are the right ways.

**In Christianity these ways are called doctrines; in Judaism they are called Halakhot (plural of halakhah). Once again: are these "ways" taught in the religious schools the same as the Bible? Are they Scripture? No. But they are said to capture the correct essence and meaning of the Bible. The Church is doctrine based just as Judaism is Halakhah based.**

*Isa 55:10-11 For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not **return there** without watering the earth, and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes from my mouth: it will not return empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.*

- **Nothing happens that God is not already aware of and has not allowed. How comforting it is to know that God still is in control of the events of the earth. Sometimes we may not understand what is happening in our world today, but Paul in Romans tells us clearly that God is in control.**

who knows how they would receive Paul...

<sup>11</sup> I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong— <sup>12</sup> that is, that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith.



And that thinking

involved much debate and processing of information; and he didn't necessarily agree with James, Jesus' brother, who headed up The Way in Jerusalem. For one thing, James wasn't a trained rabbi; he was merely a country boy who happened to be the brother of Yeshua.

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lived spoke, thought, and wrote in the context of Jewish society in the 1st century A.D.; what is called the 2nd Temple period. It was a Jewish society that was based from birth to death on Jewish Law: Halakhah...this was not the law of Moses...

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So what does all of this mean for us and our study of Romans?. We're going to go where the Scriptures lead even when it troubles us and we don't like it. We're going to venture where angels fear to tread and we're going to open up a few cans of worms and some will no doubt escape.

And we're going to delve into who Paul actually was, and the Jewish cultural terms in which he, of course, spoke, thought, and wrote. All along the way, no matter how challenging or uncomfortable this may get, rest assured that the one constant will be that Jesus is the Messiah; He is the Son of God and He is God. And other than by Him and His sacrifice on the cross, there is no way for anyone to be delivered from sin.

But it also means we are going to have to learn about the one thing about Paul's letters or on the Gospels. And that missing thing is the context of Jewish society in the 1st century A.D.; what is called the 2nd Temple period. It was a Jewish society that was based from birth to death on Jewish Law: Halakhah.

Romans were Hellenistic, Hellenism refers to the lifestyle and culture practiced by the gentile Greeks and Romans; this was the dominant and desired culture of the Roman Empire., but we cant discard the Jewishness of its author, the Jewishness of its context, the Jewishness of its theology, and the Jewishness of its meaning and message. In truth the Book of Romans is thoroughly Jewish literature that even employs rather standard debate and defense principles and terminology used by the Sages and Rabbis in the Talmud.

Yes, the oldest extant manuscripts of this book are written in Greek; but this should not be troubling. Greek was the most universally spoken language in the Roman Empire. Paul was a Diaspora Jew whose first language was Greek, the Jews (believing and not) in Rome (to whom the letter was written) would have spoken Greek. But nevertheless all the history, theology, Scripture passages, and thought patterns that Paul was transmitting were purely Hebrew in origin. It is only that these Hebrew thoughts were necessarily being transmitted in the Greek language.

Let's remember who Paul was. Although a Diaspora Jew born in Tarsus of Cilicia, he identified with mainstream Judaism (let's call it Rabbinic Judaism to give it a clearer picture). I say that because the ordinary common Jews of the holy land and those of the Diaspora can't really be called adherents to Rabbinic Judaism; that connection occurs mainly with those who fancied being religious experts (like the Pharisees).

The common folks would not have identified themselves with any specific Jewish party. Thus we don't find ordinary Jews saying that they are Pharisees. In fact Paul was part of a specific strand of Rabbinic Judaism that was espoused by, and taught by, the highly acclaimed teacher Gamaliel. Paul expressly

came to live in Jerusalem in order to be taught by Gamaliel. The Talmud makes it clear that Gamaliel only took students who had exceptional aptitude and devotion, and who showed promise such that one day they could become rabbis.

We don't have to conjecture in any way about Paul in this regard; he calls himself a Pharisee, and his training at Gamaliel's school is a recorded fact. When his training was complete he didn't graduate as a novice or an intern; but rather as one having mastered the philosophy and nuances of this particular strand of Judaism. Paul was a rabbi through and through.

I'm going to make an analogy now in order to make a point that I've touched on before and I hope you can give me all your focus for a few moments; it will be valuable to you.

On the other hand Paul thought like a rabbi, because he was a brilliant formally trained rabbi at one of the two most prestigious rabbinical schools in Jerusalem. Paul didn't somehow give up all that he was and all that he had learned as a Jewish rabbi to start a new gentile based religion; rather he sought to assimilate the new revelations about Messiah Jesus into all that he was and all that he knew.

Thus when Paul makes a point in Romans (and in his other letters) he does so in the style, protocol and thought processes of a rabbi.

@@@@@ Jerusalem the seat of Judaism and birthplace of Christianity...and Rome the seat of the world and the world's system and ways...how to being those steeped and formed in one system into union with those steeped and formed from another system...

There is little opposition among Bible scholars to the fact that it was Paul who wrote the Book of Romans. He claims that he did, and what he discusses and how he discusses matters is typical Paul. In fact in chapter 16 he says that he is writing this letter to the Romans from Gaius's house, a place where the local Believers' congregation meets. If this is the same Gaius that he baptized and that we read about in 1 Corinthians 1 (and it is likely that it is), then it means that Paul is writing his letter to the Romans from Corinth. His itinerary and timeline as it appears in Acts allows for this interpretation.

Paul had the stated intention of traveling to Spain. Rome, then, would be a logical place to stop and stay for awhile on his way to Spain. Very likely this letter was written towards the end of his 3rd missionary journey, when he was planning on getting back to Jerusalem in time for the Feast of Pentecost Festival. So with good confidence we can say that the Book of Romans was written in 57 or 58 A.D., probably leaning towards the earlier date. What is important to know is that he wrote the letter to the Romans a few years before he was taken, as a prisoner, to Rome where he apparently met his death. So don't mistakenly think that the Book of Romans is the result of his time in Rome that we read about in the final chapter of Acts. The order of our New Testament sort of creates that false impression because the Book of Romans immediately follows Acts in the New Testament; Acts is where we hear about his journey to Rome. What this means is that Yeshua had come and gone about 25 years earlier, and so the Jesus Movement had had around a quarter century to spread; turns out it was wildly successful.

So what did Paul hope to accomplish by writing this extensive letter to the Believing community in Rome? A letter that, for its day, was abnormally long. That is the subject of widely varying opinions. If one is from the rather standard Evangelical worldview, then Paul's purpose was to use this letter to create a new Christian systematic theology. Fortunately, mainstream Bible scholars who see validity in the new perspective on Paul are having the courage to at least start to pour cold water on this long held Christian doctrine that Romans is systematic theology. In his highly acclaimed commentary on Romans, Douglas J. Moo, a teacher at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, says this: "It is not just a systematic theology but a letter, written in specific circumstances and with specific

purposes. The message of Romans is, indeed, timeless; but to understand its message aright, we must appreciate the specific context out of which Romans was written".

That context is what we are going to develop over the next several months as we study the book; it is too complex to reduce to a couple of stock bumper-sticker phrases. However the message of Romans therefore explains the purpose of Romans. And when it comes to the message the viewpoints are also wide ranging; but first and foremost in modern Christianity it is, as I have just said, Paul establishing a Christian systematic theology primarily for the benefit of gentiles. As much as I disagree with that, I must also admit that I have no rigid view on a single definable purpose or message for the book; I think Paul had several issues he was addressing that were directly aimed at the Roman Believers. However by now Paul had gained much experience in dealing with

<sup>2</sup> gentiles and in bringing gentile Believers into the fold. But because his preferred base of operations (wherever he went to evangelize) was a synagogue this meant he also dealt with Jews and in bringing Jewish Believers into the fold. As Paul had learned the hard way, this dynamic of including gentiles in a Jewish messianic faith opened up a religious can of worms regarding the touchy relationship between Jewish and gentile Believers; a touchy relationship that has barely changed over the 2 millennia since the days of Paul. So, as my friend Joseph Shulam aptly puts it: "The book of Romans presents us with a textual picture of certain prevalent and controversial theological debates within Second Temple Jewish thought". If we approach the Book of Romans understanding this underlying circumstance then we'll be far more able to decipher what Paul intends and what he is dealing with.

a term such as "Second Temple Jewish thought" might

sound a bit high-brow and confusing. The term is simply referring to the Biblical time period when, after the Babylonian exile of the Jews, the Temple in Jerusalem was rebuilt. The first Temple was built by Solomon in the late 900's B.C. and stood until the Babylonians destroyed it around 587 B.C. The second Temple then is what Ezra and Nehemiah built as former Jewish captives set free by the Persians some 70 years after the Babylonians had conquered them. So the Second Temple Period actually begins as early as about 500 B.C. and continues on until the Romans destroyed it in 70 A.D.

That said, what concerns us is that small portion of the long Second Temple Period that begins a little before the birth of Christ and continues throughout the New Testament time. As you can imagine is the case with most any culture, many changes occurred within Jewish society and religion over the nearly 600 year time period from Israel's release from captivity in Babylon to when the second Temple was destroyed. What matters in our study is how Judaism was taught, known and practiced by Jewish society from about the year 10 B.C. to about 70 A.D., because Judaism was the basis of Jewish society. That was especially so in the Holy Land, but it also extended to all the places in foreign lands where 95% of all living Jews resided. Judaism was less stringent and not quite as dominant in the Diaspora; but nonetheless Judaism still formed the foundation for Jewish culture in the Diaspora. That is because unlike modern Christianity, which is routinely compartmentalized and separated away from the non-religious part of our lives, Judaism defined every detail of every aspect of Jewish life, 24 hours a day, every day of the year, from birth to death. If you were a Jew in New Testament times there was no compartmentalizing and no days off from Judaism.

Paul was a Jew; others verified that he was a Jew (such as Luke and Peter), and he was a Rabbi, having graduated from Gamaliel's Rabbinical school. In fact he belonged to one of the strictest sects of Judaism, the Pharisees.

**This is something that he readily admitted to, and stated for the record in Acts 26 that he remained a Pharisee; this statement was made some years after writing the letter to the Romans.**

Acts 26:4 “The Jewish people all know the way I have lived ever since I was a child, from the beginning of my life in my own country, and also in Jerusalem. <sup>5</sup> They have known me for a long time and can testify, if they are willing, that I conformed to the strictest sect of our religion, living as a Pharisee. <sup>6</sup> And now it is because of my hope in what God has promised our ancestors that I am on trial today. <sup>7</sup> This is the promise our twelve tribes are hoping to see fulfilled as they earnestly serve God day and night.

In fact in Acts 24, as he stood before Governor Felix, he plainly said that he also remained committed to the Law (something that was mandatory if one was to maintain their Jewishness).

<sup>11</sup> You can easily verify that no more than twelve days ago *I went up to Jerusalem to worship*. <sup>12</sup> My accusers did not find me arguing with anyone at the *temple*, or stirring up a crowd in *the synagogues* or anywhere else in the city. <sup>13</sup> And they cannot prove to you the charges they are now making against me. <sup>14</sup> However, I admit that I worship the God of our ancestors as a follower of the Way, which they call a sect. I believe everything that is in accordance with the Law and that is written in the Prophets, <sup>15</sup> and I have the same hope in God as these men themselves have, that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked. <sup>16</sup> So I strive always to keep my conscience clear before God and man. <sup>17</sup> “After an absence of several years, I came to Jerusalem to bring my people gifts for the poor and to present offerings. <sup>18</sup> *I was ceremonially clean* when they found me in the temple courts doing this. There was no crowd with me, nor was I involved in any disturbance.

We know from the Bible and other sources that while Paul could legitimately claim his office as Apostle to the gentiles (Yeshua, Himself, had appointed Paul to the office as recorded in Acts chapter 9),

Acts 9:15 But the Lord said to Ananias, “Go! This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel. <sup>16</sup> I will show him how much he must suffer for my name.”

there were other Jewish Believers who took it upon themselves to proselytize gentiles for Christ (in Acts 18 we read of one particular independent Jewish evangelist named Apollos).

Acts 18:24 Meanwhile a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was a learned man, with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures. <sup>25</sup> He had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and he spoke with great fervor<sup>[a]</sup> and taught about Jesus accurately, though he knew only the baptism of John.

In fact, the awkward position that Paul immediately finds himself in as he is penning the opening to his letter to the Romans is that he must admit that he is NOT the founder of the Believing community in Rome; he's never even been to Rome. Someone else (probably a few others) had some time ago established the Believing community there.

So is Paul "sheep stealing" by now jumping in and insisting that the Believers of Rome follow his teaching and rulings? Paul's implication in the Book of Romans is unmistakable: he holds himself up as the final authority over the congregation in Rome regardless of what those who first brought the Gospel to Rome may have taught. But so far as the Believers of Rome are concerned, by whose decree is Paul the final authority? At the moment James, brother of Jesus, was still the recognized leader of The Way in Jerusalem, the acknowledged headquarters of the movement. Paul's answer to this question is the truth: Messiah Yeshua appointed him. But will anyone believe him?

Even more, does being the Apostle to the gentiles elevate Paul's status such that all gentile Believers are to consider Paul as their leader, instead of James? Might this split the Jesus movement into gentiles and Jews with gentiles following Paul and Jews following James? This was the ambiguous and tense situation that Paul was facing, and it is why he goes into such depth in his letter and covers an array of issues. Some of his letter is to introduce himself; some is to explain his office as an Apostle and

why they should submit to him; and some is to instruct Rome's Believers in what Paul sees as important theological issues that define their faith, their relationship to God, and the inherently problematic relationship between the Jews and gentiles who form the Believing community.

But who better to do this seemingly impossible task than Paul? He could speak, read, and write Greek and Hebrew. He was a Diaspora Jew so he had much more tolerance and familiarity with gentiles than his Holy Land Jewish countrymen. He was a stellar rabbinical student of Gamaliel and thus held great knowledge of the Torah, the Prophets, and Jewish Law (Halakhah). He had served the Jewish High Court, the Sanhedrin. And his Choleric personality allowed him to lead instinctively

4 / 12

### Ch. 1

and between the gentile Believers versus the Jewish Believers in Yeshua, over the place of gentiles within the community of Believers as well their place in the Kingdom of Heaven. He is caught between 2 worlds that on the surface have little, if any, common ground. He was thoroughly a rabbinical Jew who had lived his entire life based upon Jewish Law, Halakhah; but at the same time the risen Yeshua had instructed Paul to be His emissary to take the Gospel to the gentile world in fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant. Since Paul was the designated Apostle to the gentiles, then it seems that Christ left it up to him to figure out how to establish principles and rules that would adapt a Hebrew Gospel to a gentile culture, or perhaps vice versa.

No doubt this forced Paul to carefully examine something that had become hazy within Judaism over the last few centuries, and was intertwined within his life: what part of Judaism was actually Holy Scripture and what part was Tradition? Where are the boundaries? Which rules are the non-negotiables? What should be seen as the core issues and what can be seen as side issues? What is mandatory and what is optional? Can there be different rules (even different theologies) for Jews versus gentiles if the two groups that have been historic enemies have any hope of living and worshipping side by side as brothers and sisters in Christ?

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The Hebraic Roots Bible commentators Shulam and LeCornu have researched and cross referenced some of the terminology that Paul likes to use in his letters with what is used by rabbis in their arguments and debates as they appear in the Talmud, and they found some expected similarities.

For those of you who might not know, the Talmud is essentially a large volume of Jewish writings containing the religious rulings, traditions, and customs of Judaism. But it operated in a unique way. Rabbis whose thoughts were included in the Talmud used certain standard phrases when commenting on certain matters of Halakhah (Jewish Law) that indicated agreement

or disagreement with the ruling of another earlier rabbi. Those who study the Talmud perfectly understand that the insertion of these key phrases helps the reader to know the salient matter under discussion and what point is being made by the rabbi.

That is, the Talmud operates on certain literary conventions and rules unique to the Hebrews, and especially to rabbis, and Jewish students are taught their significance.

For instance: one of Paul's favorite phrases is "what shall we then say?" This is not unique to Paul; rather it is standard rabbinic terminology used in the Talmud to introduce a matter for debate. Later in the discussion the conclusion (the religious ruling) on this matter that an earlier rabbi had decided is quoted, and then this later rabbi refutes it because he thinks the ruling is wrong. So after the words "what shall we then say?" will come a discussion of the particular matter that is under examination.

Evidence is produced usually in the form of Scripture verses. Sooner or later a conclusion (that is, a ruling that rabbi so and so had made about the matter) is given, but then it will be discredited by the rabbi who is now commenting on it. The phrase used to indicate that the later rabbi disagrees with the conclusion of the former rabbi is "God forbid" or "Heaven forbid" or sometimes "may it never be".

So the entire argument begins with "what shall we then say?" and it ends with "God forbid" (or its equivalent). So not surprisingly in the Book of Romans we find a passionate discussion on a matter of extreme importance to Paul beginning at verse 30 of chapter 9.

Because Paul is a rabbi and this discussion (or argument) is a matter of arriving at a proper ruling (establishing the correct Halakhah) as concerns gentile participation in the covenants given to Israel then naturally Paul begins his debate as any trained rabbi would:

Romans 9:30-10:2 CJB

30 So, what are we to say? This: that Gentiles, even though they were not striving for righteousness, have obtained righteousness; but it is a righteousness grounded in trusting!

31 However, Isra'el, even though they kept pursuing a Torah that offers righteousness, did not reach what the Torah offers.

32 Why? Because they did not pursue righteousness as being grounded in trusting but as if it were grounded in doing legalistic works. They stumbled over the stone that makes people stumble.

33 As the Tanakh puts it, "Look, I am laying in Tziyon a stone that will make people stumble, a rock that will trip them up. But he who rests his trust on it will not be humiliated."

CJB Romans 10:1 Brothers, my heart's deepest desire and my prayer to God for Isra'el is for their salvation;

2 for I can testify to their zeal for God. But it is not based on correct understanding;

7 / 12 The next several verses, right on through Romans chapter 10 and on into Romans 11 is but the body of the discussion about whether or not gentiles ought to be able to participate in Israel's covenants with God and what effect this might have on Israel. A number of OT Scriptures are quoted to bolster Paul's position, along with some of his comments on those Scriptures, until we finally arrive at Romans 11:11. And there we read:

Romans 11:11 CJB 11 "In that case, I say, isn't it that they (Israel) have stumbled with the result that they have permanently fallen away?" Heaven forbid! Quite the contrary, it is by means of their stumbling that the deliverance has come to the Gentiles, in order to provoke them to jealousy.....

So essentially

Romans 9:30 to 11:11 is a unit; we have the issue presented and then the debate that follows Romans 9:30.

Essentially Paul is having this debate with himself; he sets up the straw man and argues with him. The beginning of this unit is indicated with the phrase "what shall we then say?" This is the standard rabbinical signal that at some point a conclusion or ruling is going to be made, and then the person leading this discussion (Paul) is going to indicate that he strongly disagrees with the conclusion about what ought to be decided by saying "Heaven forbid". The erroneous conclusion that Paul is battling against (with himself) is that if Israel has indeed stumbled, and now God has included gentiles, does it mean that Israel has permanently fallen away from God?

Paul's answer to this erroneous conclusion? Heaven forbid! Then in the next sentence he states what he considers to be the right ruling (the correct Halakhah), which is that by means of Israel stumbling deliverance has come to the Gentiles, but all this is with the hope that all Israel will be saved.

Most gentile New Testament commentators who have no idea of 2nd Temple Judaism or Jewish culture (and certainly have no working knowledge of the Talmud) look at the erroneous conclusion in Romans 11 about Israel having permanently fallen away and say "See! Paul has just admitted that Israel has fallen away from God forever. And Paul is dismayed by this terrible outcome and so he cries out in agony for his fellow Jews: Heaven Forbid!" Nothing could be further from reality as I have just demonstrated to you.

But if one is ignorant of how Jewish society and culture and religion operated in New Testament times, how could one possibly come to the correct conclusions about what these Bible characters and writers meant by what they said?

My point is this: we need to read Paul's letters through the eyes of a rabbi in the 1st century A.D. and that is no easy task; there are some things we have to be open to learning in order to do that.

When Paul wrote he realized that he was handcuffed by the fact that many who will read his letters are gentiles who have little means to truly understand what he is telling them because they have no understanding of Jewish culture or Judaism, or the Hebrew Bible. So he tries his best to use terms that gentiles might understand better; terms that may not be an exact fit to what he is trying to communicate, but terms that gentiles with a little to no understanding, of Biblical knowledge can better understand.

But this brings up another important matter. Who, then, but a Jew in Paul's day could explain to gentiles what the Hebrew Scriptures (the Bible, the OT) meant? Who but a Jew could expound upon what Paul meant in his letters, and then explain it to gentiles? This is why Paul was firmly synagogue-based in his evangelism.

He needed Believing Jews in the synagogues of foreign lands to be the representatives of the faith; Believing Jews who had a heart for gentiles being included. I would go so far as to say that Paul counted on, depended upon, Believing Jews to interpret his letters to Believing (or even seeking) gentiles. For by the end of Paul's century when gentiles began to dominate the Jesus movement and then quickly moved to sever all Jewishness from it in order to make it a new gentile religion called Christianity, the message of the several inspired Jewish writers of the Bible suffered from distortion; accidental and intentional. It would not be until early in the 3rd century A.D. that the New Testament was ordained into existence.

By then, anti- Semitism was a basic foundational doctrine of the Church so there was little hope that these New Testament writings, written by Jews, would be properly interpreted and applied by gentiles. But today, as demonstrated by the recent "new perspective" on Paul that so far has been adopted by a few of our most prestigious modern Bible scholars, we are seeing a change of attitude. Perhaps we

are living in the era in which the Spirit is moving across the face of this planet, in the souls of Believers, to bring a better understanding of the Word of God to His worshippers. I have no other way to explain the sudden eruption of the Hebrew Roots movement.

This is the challenge that we face as 21st century Believers when reading Paul's Epistles and none more so than the Book of Romans. Since followers of Christ rely so heavily on the Book of Romans it is imperative that we get it right; and it is clear that anti-Jewish prejudices have for centuries tainted the teachings of Bible scholars and Bible translations. The good news is that because of the lateness of our era as the time of Messiah's return approaches, we are seeing a movement of Believers towards an openness to rediscovering the Bible in its Hebrew context and towards looking to Jews to help unravel the true meaning of Holy Scripture.

So I think that while what I intend to teach you may presently not be well accepted within the institutional Church, more and more Believers will see the truth of it and grab hold as the days go by. Why do I think this?

Because it was prophesied 2500 years ago and I see it happening with my own eyes. Zechariah 8:23 CJB 23 ADONAI-Tzva'ot says, 'When that time comes, ten men will take holdspeaking all the languages of the nations- will grab hold of the cloak of a Jew and say, "We want to go with you, because we have heard that God is with you."'"

Next time we'll conclude our introduction and get started on the first chapter of the Book of Romans.

9 / 12

Last week we dealt with the opening words of Romans chapter 1 because how one interprets it sets Paul's tone for the entire letter. The first 6 verses behave as a sort of preamble. And let us remember that while in Christendom the rather lofty term Epistles is used of the books that Paul wrote, in common speech each of these books is but a letter written and sent to either a person or a specific congregation in a specific city, and each is meant to address certain issues pertinent to that person or group. There is no universal agreement among Bible scholars on how many New Testament books were actually written by Paul; the number is as few as 8 and varies up to as many as 13. However Paul is universally agreed as the author of the Book of Romans. This letter is to Believers in the **city** of Rome; not Rome in the sense of the entire Roman Empire, and so not "Romans" in the sense of all citizens of the Empire.

Paul's preamble contains some important information that applies to our faith. This information has been historically misconstrued and we dealt with that in depth in our previous lesson. As a reminder: there were two terms or phrases that together define the opening tone. Those terms were "slave of Messiah Yeshua" and "Apostle". Unlike what it might seem at first glance, the phrase "slave of Messiah Yeshua" is not meant to indicate exceptional humility or even self-effacing. Rather in Hebrew thought pattern those words indicate a high honor; a position of high status. Second, the term Apostle (an English word) comes from the Greek word *apostolos*. *Apostolos* more or less indicates someone who has been sent with instructions to carry out an assignment. In Roman society this word was used in the realm of the military and in commercial shipping. However its use misses the mark on the concept that the Jewish Paul was trying to get across. The term Paul would have preferred to use was **shaliach** (a Hebrew word). However there is no direct equivalent to **shaliach** in Greek, so he chose the best approximation the Greek language offered:

*apostolos*. **Shaliach** carries more weight and authority than *apostolos*. A **shaliach** is an agent who carries all the power and authority of his master. A **shaliach** has a great deal of personal choice and autonomy (acknowledging, of course, that whatever he does he does on behalf of, and in the name of, his Master). In Christian thinking an Apostle is 1mere messengers. This is why they were able to do miracles, and it is why the Apostles expected Believers to obey them.

Paul begins his letter by telling the Believers of the congregations in Rome that they were obligated to consider him as their ultimate earthly authority. He says this is so on the grounds that since Yeshua personally appointed Paul as His **shaliach** to the gentiles, and since Yeshua also called (or elected) those gentiles in Rome to faith as Believers, then it follows that regardless that it was NOT Paul who established these Believing congregations in Rome, they should, nonetheless, subject themselves to his authority.

Bottom line: Paul was not being humble; rather he was being insistent and authoritative, and he had every reason to believe that he was right in being so.

Let's continue by starting at verse 7. We'll re-read most of chapter 1 beginning there.

**RE-READ ROMANS CHAPTER 1:7 – end**



The words of verse 7 are basically the way Paul starts most of his letters. It is a customary greeting and it states to whom the letter is intended. Although without doubt this letter addresses mostly the gentile Believers of Rome, it also includes the Jewish Believers. So when Paul says “to all in Rome whom God loves, who have been called by Yeshua and set apart for him”, it is referring to all **Believers** in the city of Rome, Jew and gentile.

Notice something important at the end of verse 7; Paul refers separately to God the Father and to Yeshua the Messiah. Paul sees the Father and Yeshua as two distinct entities. Or perhaps as two identifiable parts of a whole. Thus for Christians who believe that essentially the essence of the Father has been rolled into the essence of the Son (Christ), and thus the Father has either retreated from the scene or is no longer relevant, that is certainly not how Paul sees it. Some in Christianity make this claim of irrelevance of the Father in modern times because of Yeshua’s statement in John 14 that if “you’ve seen me you’ve seen the Father”. They are wrong. Rather it is that just as Paul is an agent of Yeshua, but still is subordinate to Him, so we find Christ pronounce that while He has been given all authority on earth and in heaven, He is still effectively an agent of God and thus subordinate to His Father. I don’t want to get hung up here on a controversial theological issue of the substance and nature of God. However just know that Paul’s theology does not allow for the Father and the Son to be the same person or for one to have abdicated his position. Both exist, both are relevant, and both have their own attributes and functions. There is a definite hierarchy with the Father at the top.

Now one other important item. The CJB doesn’t do a good job with verse 7 as it leaves out a word; the word is hagios. Typically hagios is translated into English as “saints”. So here is this verse in the much more literal KJV.

**I. Romans 1:7 To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.**

“Beloved of God” and “saints” are essentially synonyms and they are Old Testament terms used of God’s chosen people, the Hebrews. So Paul is extending the use of those terms to Believers, Jew and gentile. The reason I point that out is that it is often erroneously claimed in Christianity that “saints” is a more or less a new and exclusive term coined for New Testament Believers in Christ.

In verse 8 thanksgiving is Paul’s priority (as it should be for all of us in all of our prayers). What is Paul thanking God for? It is for the living reality of the trust exhibited by some Jews and gentiles in Rome to accept Yeshua as Messiah. But what ought to draw our attention is where Paul says “I thank my God **through** Messiah Yeshua”. This word through (dia in Greek) is there in all extant Greek manuscripts of the Book of Romans and I am yet to find an English translation that leaves it out. I’m sure Paul didn’t mean to create a heated doctrinal argument by inserting that word “through”, but he did.

If he means what he said (and I see no reason to believe otherwise), then he envisions Christ as an intermediary between God and Man. Now while some Jews today claim that such a concept as there being a heavenly intermediary is a show-stopper, in fact in the non-Biblical but authoritative Jewish writings of Enoch and Tobit, and a few other ancient Jewish sources, 2nd Temple Judaism believed that archangels were intermediaries between Man and God. And perhaps if “intermediary” isn’t the perfect English word to use, then maybe “intercessor” helps to define what is meant. We could spend significant time on this theological issue, but I don’t want to get parked here. What is unambiguous as it appears in ALL NT versions is that Paul is rendering thanksgiving NOT to Yeshua, but rather to the Father THROUGH Yeshua (with Yeshua providing the understood mediating role that many Jews in the 2nd Temple era took for granted). So the issue that Judaism would have had with Paul is not the concept of there being an intermediary; but rather who or what fulfilled that role? And Paul says that it is Jesus Christ who is the intermediary (at least He is from now on).

As an application then, to whom do we direct our prayers? The Father or to the Son? Are we to pray to Yeshua or are we to pray to the Father? Or does it make any difference? Yeshua knew with His advent that this was already an issue among His disciples, so rather than leave them hanging He told them (and us) exactly how we should pray. I’ll use the King James Version because it is by far the most familiar to Christians.

3 / 13

**Matthew 6:9-13 KJV**

**9 After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.**

**10 Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.**

**11 Give us this day our daily bread.**

**12 And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.**

**13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.**

Just as Yeshua instructed us in the previous chapter of Matthew (chapter 5) that He did NOT abolish the Law, here in Matthew 6 He instructs us to pray to the Father. Pretty definitive. So it is as Paul said: we pray to and deal with the Father; but we do it through the agency of Yeshua. How that all happens and is processed in the Heavens I don’t know. But the protocol and what our mindset about it is to be is clear. The Father remains not only relevant, but supreme; nothing has changed. And why would it? The Father has always had a Son, since eternity past. It is only that

at a point in temporal history His Son, Yeshua, became flesh and appeared on earth.

Paul tells the Believers in the city of Rome that not only is he aware of them, but that they are important to him such that he prays for them. Remembering that Paul is a Pharisee, then when he says that he regularly remembers them “in his prayers”, what he is referring to is the standard 3 times per day prayers that the most pious of Jews (the Pharisees) followed as a tradition. I’ll repeat what I’m about to tell you at regular intervals because it is the Rosetta Stone for what we are studying: Paul thinks like a Jew, and behaves like a Jew, because he is a Jew. When we read his writings, we need to see them from his Jewish viewpoint. Thus when he writes his letters (his Epistles) he unconsciously does so from a Jewish perspective. Why? Because he is not a gentile, even though he has some familiarity with gentiles. More, as he has stated plainly, he is a Hebrew of Hebrews and a Pharisee of Pharisees; he is among the most pious and most strict of Jews. He said this many years after becoming a Believer and an Apostle. His zealous and highly educated Jewishness is the underlying context atop which he has layered the meaning and impact of the arrival of the Messiah. It is the context upon which he understands what a Messiah is, what a Messiah does, and how people are to relate to the Messiah. Paul’s Pharisee training under Gamaliel is also his underlying context upon which he builds an understanding of who Messiah is in relation to God. And, Paul believes that Yeshua, as Messiah, is the Son of God who sits at the Father’s right hand (he got this from Daniel). This is not the Tom Bradford perspective; it is what Paul says. And very recently this is also the so-called new perspective on Paul that has been adopted by many eminent Bible scholars such as E.P. Sanders, Douglas Moo and James D.G. Dunn.

4 / 13

This won’t be the last time I say these things to you because I know firsthand how difficult it can be to let go of the Christian doctrines we’ve been taught most of our lives in exchange for the Scriptural truth. We unconsciously read the Bible through the lens of gentile Western Christianity as formed and defined by our early Church Fathers. They were right about much of it; but wrong about some critical areas that their anti-Jewish bias blinded them to. And it has fallen to us, in this present generation, to try to right these wrongs so that we can see God for who He really is, His plan of redemption for what it really is, His Jewish people for who they are to Him, and where we (as His followers) fit in to all that. Why is this revelation happening now, in our day? I think it is a sure sign that Messiah is getting ready for His return, and the Holy Spirit is preparing us.

At the end of verse 10 Paul expresses his desire to come to Rome to visit this congregation. He indeed will, in about 4 years, go to Rome; but it will be in chains and there is no evidence that he ever had contact with those to whom he was writing this letter. He follows this up by explaining why he’s so eager to come to Rome; he wants to impart some spiritual gift that may encourage and strengthen them. I’ve read many comments about exactly what Paul has in mind here but I think it is a general comment that comes from a Jewish mindset of his day and that Paul fully expects that no matter which congregation he visits he will, through God’s grace, impart a spiritual gift at God’s discretion because he is, after all, Yeshua’s Apostle to the gentiles.

This concept of spiritual gifts is not a New Testament concept. The Essene community at Qumran believed in spiritual gifts and wrote about it. When I compare what I read in the Dead Sea Scrolls with certain words and terms used by both Yeshua and Paul, it is clear there was close contact between them. I’m in no way saying that Paul or Yeshua were Essenes. At the same time, Essene theology is very close to New Testament theology and clearly Yeshua and Paul were familiar with it. Listen to this short excerpt from one of the Dead Sea Scrolls called 1QS.

***And these are the ways of these Spirits in the world. It is of the Spirit of truth to enlighten the heart of man, and to level him in the ways of true righteousness.....and to it belongs the Spirit of humility and forbearance, of abundant mercy and eternal goodness.....and almighty wisdom with faith in all the works of God and trust in His abundant grace.....and the spirit of knowledge in every design and zeal for just ordinances.....Such are the councils of the Spirit to the sons of truth in the world.....The fountain of righteousness, the reservoir of power, and the dwelling place of glory but God has given them an everlasting possession to those who He has chosen. He has granted them a share in the lot of the Saints....***

To our ears this sounds like it could have come straight out of the New Testament. It is full of truths and principles and terms that, for centuries, have been said to exist only in the New Testament. But the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls has changed all that. So Paul had something rather culturally familiar in mind when he spoke about imparting spiritual gifts to the Believers in Rome and it would have fallen along the lines of what I just read to you.

Interestingly in verse 12 we find Paul backtracking a bit on what he just said. Rather than defining the spiritual gifts as something rather ethereal that he will bestow upon them he now says that what he meant to say was that there would be mutual encouragement from what they give to each other. There have been a number of theories as to what Paul was backtracking from. The one that makes the most sense to me is that he realized that gentiles would have had no understanding of what he means by spiritual gifts (such a thing is only known within Jewish society). So he sort of redefines his term “spiritual gifts” as meaning a gift of mutual encouragement that Believers ought to give one another.

Paul proceeds to explain why he hasn’t shown up in Rome. He says that he has wanted to come for some time, but circumstances have conspired to prevent it. Anyone with Paul’s aspirations would of course want to establish a congregation in the capital of the known world: Rome. But because unforeseen conditions arose to prevent Paul from going, other evangelists went and established the Believing congregations. This meant that they would have also

planted their doctrines and their understanding of Yeshua. Paul wanted in. As he says, he was hoping to come and to have some fruit in their congregation, just as he has fruit in so many other congregations where gentiles are a part. Translation: I'd like to have a role in your congregation so that my efforts and teaching would directly produce some good and righteous outcomes.

Let's never forget that as inspired a man of God as Paul was, he was just a man. Paul felt much ownership for the gentile congregations that were established. He was used to selecting the leadership and laying down the rules and regulations, and it was his doctrinal viewpoints that were adopted. The truth is, what little reward on earth that he would ever get for his hard work and dedication was that he would see good fruit come from it. He didn't want Rome to be the exception, especially when (outside of Jerusalem) it was the most important and influential place on earth at this time.

In verse 14 Paul continues his explanation by essentially saying, "Sorry but I've been very busy". And because he had begun his letter by describing himself in the lofty term "slave of Messiah Yeshua", he continues this thought by saying that he has an obligation (to Yeshua) to go to both civilized Greeks and uncivilized barbarians. In our CJB where it says "uncivilized people", that is incorrect. The Greek says barbarians. Barbarians were first and foremost people who didn't speak Greek. Non-Greek speakers were considered less civilized according to the worldview of the Roman Empire. Together Greeks and barbarians constituted the gentiles of the world. Paul then adds that he is also to bring the Gospel to both the educated and uneducated. So every gentile, regardless of language or intelligence or status, is entitled to hear the Gospel and he intends to see to it that it happens. He concludes that thought by saying that therefore he is also eager to proclaim the Good News to citizens of Rome. In other words, they certainly fall within the definition of the people he is obligated to evangelize.

Clearly verses 16 and 17 are the powerful theme of the entire letter. The principle emphasis is on the saving power of the Gospel. But the "why" of it is also briefly explained; that is, **why** is the Gospel able to save? The answer is that the Gospel manifests God's righteousness. These verses (and what follows) are so dense with theological principles that are the heart and soul of our faith that we'll take as much time as needed to flesh them out.

6 / 13

Paul begins with the strange statement that he is "not ashamed" of the Gospel. What does that mean? Very likely it is a Jewish expression. First, understand that there is a difference between being shamed, and being ashamed. Being shamed is a social condition. Middle Eastern societies were shame and honor societies. That is, perhaps the supreme societal goal of all the people was to be living in a state of honor. The worst thing that could happen was to be shamed and thus have the social status of "shame" assigned to you. Shame was so serious of a societal status that there was literally no limit on how far one would go to regain their honor; it often involved killing the person who brought shame upon you.

Ashamed, far from being a social status, is a psychological condition. It involves guilt, the deepest sense of regret, and feeling very badly about yourself for having done something, or somehow being associated with something, which society says is socially unacceptable. Being ashamed does not change your societal status, and one cannot do something to solve being ashamed since indeed it is a state of mind and not a state of your actual status among your community. In a shame and honor society, being in a state of shame means that people will shun you; you have lost your place in the community.

So Paul is not talking about being ashamed of the Gospel in the sense of shame and honor; it has nothing to do with social status. Many language experts believe that this was a well known expression in Paul's day, even if it has been lost to history, because one would have to ask why anyone might feel a sense of deep regret or guilt (be ashamed) over the Gospel message? It doesn't fit. Rather, very likely it is a negative way of communicating that one has the fullest confidence in the Gospel, or perhaps only to confess or declare the Gospel. It is not uncommon in English to use the negative to express something positive. For instance: I was not unimpressed means I was impressed. I was not disappointed means I was pleased. So I maintain that Paul was using a negative (not ashamed) to express a positive (I have confidence in) as merely a figure of speech or a manner of speaking in his day.

The next clause in verse 16 is not expressed well in the CJB. A more literal translation is: **for it is the power of God to everyone who believes**. What does this mean? To Paul "the power of God" is a mysterious, but real, force that has the ability to bring about a strong, transforming effect on human beings. This is not the only place that he uses the term "the power of God" or "God's power" or "power" in relation to God.

**1Corinthians 1:18 CJB** <sup>18</sup> *For the message about the execution-stake is nonsense to those in the process of being destroyed, but to us in the process of being saved it is the power of God.*

**1Corinthians 2:3-5 CJB** <sup>3</sup> *Also I myself was with you as somebody weak, nervous and shaking all over from fear;* <sup>4</sup> *and neither the delivery nor the content of my message relied on compelling words of "wisdom" but on a demonstration of the power of the Spirit,* <sup>5</sup> *so that your trust might not rest on human wisdom but on God's power.*

**2Corinthians 6:6-7 CJB** <sup>6</sup> *We commend ourselves by our purity, knowledge, patience and kindness; by the Ruach HaKodesh; by genuineness of love* <sup>7</sup> *and truthfulness of speech; and by God's power.*

Paul uses this "power of God" concept in several more places as well. Even more this same force, this "Power of

God", is a continuing divine force that sustains the new and better life that it creates.

So the saving nature of the Gospel is a transformative force that only God wields. But the main point is that it is from God the Father. One can trust in Christ for salvation; but the actual force that brings about salvation is the Father's. The idea that God's word has actual power to transform and save is an Old Testament idea and one of the most obvious references has to be in Psalm 107. There we find this:

**Psalm 107:19-20 CJB** *19 In their trouble they cried to ADONAI, and he rescued them from their distress; 20 he sent his word and healed them, he delivered them from destruction.*

There is a change, however, in Paul's idea of the concept of salvation as it refers to Christ and to His Believers. In the Old Testament, saving or delivering was about being rescued from an actual situation. There was danger, but the person was rescued from that danger. There was a probability of death, but the person was rescued from that deadly circumstance. In the context of the Gospel salvation is a spiritual matter. In fact, its immediate effects may be minimal from an earthly perspective. One can be in a dire situation, receive salvation in the forgiveness of sins, but yet one's physical life might not be delivered. In fact Paul tends to see the primary importance of salvation as a delivery from a future judgment of God that occurs in the End Times. So while one can be "saved" immediately, its most important effect (being spared from eternal death) will not come until later.

There is another interesting, and I think nearly lost, aspect of salvation that regards the person who is being saved. While it is long held Christian doctrine that "trust" in Yeshua as Savior is the requirement to obtain salvation, that is not exactly what Paul says. Here the CJB gets it correct as opposed to most other English translations that say, "salvation to everyone who believes". The Greek verb used is in the present tense; so this means that we have a continuing action. One must continue, persistently, to keep on trusting or believing. The doctrine of Eternal Security, once saved always saved, essentially says that one can believe briefly, and then it simply doesn't matter from that time forward. If I believed for awhile, but now I fell away and stopped believing, I'm still saved because "once saved, always saved". That is not what Paul says; he says that salvation continues only so long as we continue trusting. If our trust ends, our salvation ends.

I have heard all manner of theological apology for the once saved always saved doctrine and it usually revolves around a severe twisting of God's Word and instead injecting a personal opinion. The most common rebuttal is that once a person is saved, they would never recant their salvation at any time, ever, for any reason either because 1) they have

lost the freedom to make such a choice, or 2) if they do recant (they renounce Christ) then they never actually believed in the first place; they were just pretenders. And why is that? In a circular argument it is because it is not possible for a person who believed to stop believing. Nowhere in the Scriptures is that idea supported, but in many places the opposite is said. Here is a very small sampling.

**Matthew 7:21-23 CJB** *21 "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord!' will enter the Kingdom of Heaven, only those who do what my Father in heaven wants. 22 On that Day, many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord! Didn't we prophesy in your name? Didn't we expel demons in your name? Didn't we perform many miracles in your name?' 23 Then I will tell them to their faces, 'I never knew you! Get away from me, you workers of lawlessness!'*

**Hebrews 6:4-6 CJB** *4 For when people have once been enlightened, tasted the heavenly gift, become sharers in the Ruach HaKodesh, 5 and tasted the goodness of God's Word and the powers of the 'olam haba- 6 and then have fallen away- it is impossible to renew them so that they turn from their sin, as long as for themselves they keep executing the Son of God on the stake all over again and keep holding him up to public contempt.*

**James 5:19-20 CJB** *19 My brothers, if one of you wanders from the truth, and someone causes him to return, 20 you should know that whoever turns a sinner from his wandering path will save him from death and cover many sins.*

**2Peter 2:20-22 CJB** *20 Indeed, if they have once escaped the pollutions of the world through knowing our Lord and Deliverer, Yeshua the Messiah, and then have again become entangled and defeated by them, their latter condition has become worse than their former. 21 It would have been better for them not to have known the Way of righteousness than, fully knowing, to turn from the holy command delivered to them. 22 What has happened to them accords with the true proverb, "A dog returns to its own vomit." Yes, "The pig washed itself, only to wallow in the mud!"*

The Bible never contemplates the idea of pretenders. It never considers that all one has to do is trust momentarily and then wander away and never trust again but still remain eternally secure. Rather, one must continue to trust and believe.

Paul ends verse 16 by saying "to the Jew especially, but equally to the gentile". Clearly Paul says the Gospel is God's Power of Salvation for both Jews and gentiles. This means that the supposed Two Covenant Theology, whereby there are two routes to salvation, is nonsense. The Two Covenant concept is that the Jews are saved by following the Laws of Moses (the Mosaic Covenant) and gentiles are saved by following the New Covenant (the Covenant in Christ). That

concept is utterly put to shame right here. The Gospel of Yeshua is for both Jew and gentile; there is no other option. But the other thing that we must see is that in the words "to the Jew especially" reflects a heavenly priority. Jews had, and continue to have, a priority over gentiles when it comes to salvation. The people of Israel are the bearers of the promise contained in the Abrahamic covenant that in him all the nations of the earth would be blessed.

Gentiles (the nations) are a recipient of that blessing; but it happens THROUGH Israel.

Please also notice that Israel was also Christ's priority. He took his message to Jews, not to gentiles. That duty would fall, in time, to his Apostles. In a famous story when Yeshua went to the northern coastal region of Sidon and Tzor, gentile territory, a gentile woman approached him and here was the exchange.

**Matthew 15:21-24 CJB** <sup>21</sup> *Yeshua left that place and went off to the region of Tzor and Tzidon.* <sup>22</sup> *A woman from Kena'an who was living there came to him, pleading, "Sir, have pity on me. Son of David! My daughter is cruelly held under the power of demons!"* <sup>23</sup> *But Yeshua did not say a word to her. Then his talmidim came to him and urged him, "Send her away, because she is following us and keeps pestering us with her crying."* <sup>24</sup> *He said, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Isra'el."*

Yet after the woman begged and pleaded, Yeshua relented and healed the woman's daughter. Immediately Yeshua left and went back to the Galilee. The meaning is obvious. The Jews have priority. But, for gentiles who have faith in Him, Yeshua will save them, too, if asked. How ironic that for 1900 years Christianity has switched up God's priority and made it "to the Gentiles especially", but NOT to the Jews.

We'll continue this next week and deal with a most serious matter that is perhaps the dominant issue of our time.