

Paul's Third Missionary Journey – Third Visit to Corinth (Winter 54/55)

Acts 20:2b–3a

2b he [*Paul*] came to Greece
3a and stayed three months [*at Corinth*].

Paul's Letter to the Church in Rome – Part 1 (Winter 54/55)

Romans 1–4

Introduction and Greeting

1:1 Paul, a slave of Christ Jesus, called *to be* an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God,
2 which he promised previously through his prophets in the holy scriptures,
3 concerning his Son, who was born a descendant of David according to the flesh,
4 who was declared Son of God in power according to the Holy Spirit by the resurrection from the dead of Jesus Christ our Lord,
5 through whom we have received grace and apostleship for the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles on behalf of his name,
6 among whom you also are *the* called of Jesus Christ.
7 To all those in Rome who are loved by God, called *to be* saints. Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Thanksgiving and Occasion—Paul's Burden for Rome

8 First, I give thanks to my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is being proclaimed in the whole world.
9 For God, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, is my witness, how constantly I make mention of you,
10 always asking in my prayers if somehow now at last I may succeed to come to you in the will of God.
11 For I desire to see you, in order that I may impart some spiritual gift to you, in order to strengthen you,
12 that is, to be encouraged together with you through our mutual faith, both yours and mine.
13 Now I do not want you to be ignorant, brothers, that often I intended to come to you, and was prevented until now, in order that I might have some fruit among you also, just as also among the rest of the Gentiles.
14 I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish.
15 Thus I am eager to proclaim the gospel also to you who *are* in Rome.

Theme Statement

16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.
17 For the righteousness of God is revealed in it from faith to faith, just as it is written, "But the one who is righteous by faith will live." [[Hab 2:4](#)]

The Gentiles are Without Excuse

18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all impiety and unrighteousness of people, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,
19 because what can be known about God is evident among them, for God made *it* clear to them.
20 For from the creation of the world, his invisible *attributes*, both his eternal power and deity, are discerned clearly, being understood in the things created, so that they are without excuse.
21 For *although they* knew God, they did not honor *him* as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their reasoning, and their senseless hearts were darkened.
22 Claiming to be wise, they became fools,
23 and exchanged the glory of the immortal God with the likeness of an image of mortal human beings and birds and quadrupeds and reptiles.
24 Therefore God gave them over in the desires of their hearts to immorality, *that* their bodies would be dishonored among themselves,
25 who exchanged the truth of God with a lie, and worshiped and served the creation rather than the Creator, who is blessed for eternity. Amen.
26 Because of this, God gave them over to degrading passions, for their females exchanged the natural relations for those contrary to nature,
27 and likewise also the males, abandoning the natural relations with the female, were inflamed in their desire toward one another, males with males committing the shameless deed, and receiving in themselves the penalty that was necessary for their error.
28 And just as they did not see fit to recognize God, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do the things *that are* not proper,
29 being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greediness, malice, full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malevolence. *They are* gossipers,
30 slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boasters, contrivers of evil, disobedient to parents,

31 senseless, faithless, unfeeling, unmerciful,

32 *who, although they* know the requirements of God, that those who do such things are worthy of death, not only do they do the same *things*, but also they approve of those who do *them*.

The Jews are Also Accountable—There Is No Partiality With God

2:1 Therefore you are without excuse, O man, every one *of you* who passes judgment. For in that which you pass judgment on someone else, you condemn yourself, for you who are passing judgment are doing the same *things*.

2 Now we know that the judgment of God is according to truth against those who do such things.

3 But do you think this, O man who passes judgment on those who do such things, and who does the same *things*, that you will escape the judgment of God?

4 Or do you despise the wealth of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?

5 But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart, you are storing up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God,

6 who will reward each one according to his works: [\[Ps 62:12\]](#)

7 to those who, by perseverance in good work, seek glory and honor and immortality, eternal life,

8 but to those *who act* from selfish ambition and who disobey the truth, but who obey unrighteousness, wrath and anger.

9 *There will be* affliction and distress for every human being who does evil, of the Jew first and of the Greek,

10 but glory and honor and peace to everyone who does good, to the Jew first and to the Greek.

11 For *there* is no partiality with God.

12 For as many as have sinned without law will also perish without law, and as many as have sinned under the law will be judged by the law.

13 For it is not the hearers of the law *who are* righteous in the sight of God, but the doers of the law will be declared righteous.

14 For whenever the Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature the things of the law, these, *although they* do not have the law, are a law to themselves,

15 who show the work of the law written on their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts *one* after another accusing or even defending them

16 on the day when God judges the secret things of people, according to my gospel, through Christ Jesus.

The Jews' Misplaced Trust in Their Heritage

17 But if you call yourself a Jew and rely on the law and boast in God

18 and know his will and approve the things that are superior, *because you* are instructed by the law,

19 and are confident *that you* yourself are a guide of the blind, a light of those in darkness,

20 an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of the immature, having the embodiment of knowledge and of the truth in the law.

21 Therefore, the one who teaches someone else, do you not teach yourself? The one who preaches not to steal, do you steal?

22 The one who says not to commit adultery, do you commit adultery? The one who abhors idols, do you rob temples?

23 Who boast in the law, by the transgression of the law you dishonor God!

24 For just as it is written, "The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you." [\[Isa 52:5\]](#)

25 For circumcision is of value if you do the law, but if you should be a transgressor of the law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision.

26 Therefore, if the uncircumcised person follows the requirements of the law, will not his uncircumcision be credited for circumcision?

27 And the uncircumcised person by nature who carries out the law will judge you who, *though provided* with the precise written code and circumcision *are* a transgressor of the law.

28 For the Jew is not one outwardly, nor *is* circumcision outwardly, in the flesh.

29 But the Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision *is* of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter, whose praise *is* not from people but from God.

Paul Answers the Objections of the Jews

3:1 Therefore, what *is* the advantage of the Jew, or what *is* the use of circumcision?

2 Much in every way. For first, that they were entrusted with the oracles of God.

3 What is the result if some refused to believe? Their unbelief will not nullify the faithfulness of God, *will it*?

4 May it never be! But let God be true but every human being a liar, just as it is written,

"In order that you may be justified in your words,
and may prevail when you are judged." [\[Ps 51:4\]](#)

5 But if our unrighteousness demonstrates the righteousness of God, what shall we say? God, who inflicts wrath, *is* not unjust, *is he*?

(I am speaking according to a human perspective.)

6 May it never be! For otherwise, how will God judge the world?

7 But if by my lying, the truth of God abounded to his glory, why am I also still condemned as a sinner?

8 And *why* not (as we are slandered, and as some affirm that we say), “Let us do evil, in order that good may come *of it*?” Their condemnation is just!

The Scriptures Confirm That Both Jew and Gentile Are Guilty Before God

9 What then? Do we have an advantage? Not at all. For we have already charged both Jews and Greeks are all under sin, 10 just as it is written,

“*There* is no one righteous, not even one;

11 *there* is no one who understands;
there is no one who seeks God.

12 All have turned aside together; they have become worthless;
There is no one who practices kindness;
there is not even one. [Ps 14:1–3]

13 Their throat *is* an opened grave;
they deceive with their tongues; [Ps 5:9]
the venom of asps *is* under their lips, [Ps 140:3]

14 whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. [Ps 10:7]

15 Their feet *are* swift to shed blood;

16 destruction and distress *are* in their paths,

17 and they have not known the way of peace. [Isa 59:7–8]

18 The fear of God is not before their eyes.” [Ps 36:1]

19 Now we know that whatever the law says, it speaks to those under the law, in order that every mouth may be closed and the whole world may become accountable to God.

20 For by the works of the law no person will be declared righteous before him, [Ps 143:2] for through the law *comes* knowledge of sin.

God’s Righteousness is Available to All Who Have Faith in Jesus Christ

21 But now, apart from the law, the righteousness of God has been revealed, being testified about by the law and the prophets—

22 that is, the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. For *there* is no distinction,

23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

24 being justified as a gift by his grace, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus,

25 whom God made publicly available as the mercy seat through faith in his blood, for a demonstration of his righteousness, because of the passing over of previously committed sins,

26 in the forbearance of God, for the demonstration of his righteousness in the present time, so that he should be just and the one who justifies the *person* by faith in Jesus.

Claim—We are Justified by Faith Apart from Works

27 Therefore, where *is* boasting? It has been excluded. By what kind of law? Of works? No, but by a law of faith.

28 For we consider a person to be justified by faith apart from the works of the law.

29 Or *is God* the God of the Jews only? *Is he* not also *the God* of the Gentiles? Yes, also of the Gentiles,

30 since God *is* one, who will justify those who are circumcised by faith and those who are uncircumcised through faith.

31 Therefore, do we nullify the law through faith? May it never be! But we uphold the law.

Supporting Argument—Abraham was Justified by Faith, Not Works

4:1 What then shall we say *that* Abraham, our ancestor according to the flesh, has found?

2 For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God.

3 For what does the scripture say? “And Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him for righteousness.” [Gen 15:6]

4 Now to the one who works, his pay is not credited according to grace, but according to his due.

5 But to the one who does not work, but who believes in the one who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited for righteousness,

6 just as David also speaks about the blessing of the person to whom God credits righteousness apart from works:

7 “Blessed *are they* whose lawless deeds have been forgiven,
and whose sins are covered over.

8 Blessed *is* the person against whom the Lord will never count sin.” [Ps 32:1–2]

Supporting Argument—Abraham was Justified by Grace, Not Law

9 Therefore, *is* this blessing for those who are circumcised, or also for those who are uncircumcised? For we say, “Faith was credited to Abraham for righteousness.” [Gen 15:6]

10 How then was it credited? *While he* was circumcised or uncircumcised? Not while circumcised but while uncircumcised!

11 And he received the sign of circumcision *as* a seal of the righteousness by faith which *he had* while uncircumcised, so that he could be the father of all who believe although they are uncircumcised, so that righteousness could be credited to them, [cf. Gen 17]

12 and the father of those who are circumcised to those who are not only from the circumcision, but who also follow in the footsteps of the faith of our father Abraham which he had while uncircumcised.

13 For the promise to Abraham or to his descendants, *that* he would be heir of the world, *was* not through the law, but through the righteousness by faith.

14 For if those of the law *are* heirs, faith is rendered void and the promise is nullified.

15 For the law produces wrath, but where *there* is no law, neither *is there* transgression.

16 Because of this, *it is* by faith, in order that *it may be* according to grace, so that the promise may be secure to all the descendants, not only to those of the law, but also to those of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all

17 (just as it is written, “I have made you the father of many nations”) [Gen 17:5] before God, in whom he believed, the one who makes the dead alive and who calls the things that are not as *though* they are,

Supporting Argument—Abraham was Justified by Divine Power, Not Human Effort

18 who against hope believed in hope, so that he became the father of many nations, according to what was said, “so will your descendants be.” [Gen 15:5]

19 And not being weak in faith, he considered his own body as good as dead, *because he* was approximately a hundred years old, and the deadness of Sarah’s womb.

20 And he did not waver in unbelief at the promise of God, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God

21 and being fully convinced that what he had promised, he was also able to do.

22 Therefore it was credited to him for righteousness.

23 But it was not written for the sake of him alone that it was credited to him,

24 but also for the sake of us to whom it is going to be credited, to those who believe in the one who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead,

25 who was handed over on account of our trespasses, and was raised up in the interest of our justification.

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Chronological Notes

- 1) Luke tells us that Paul spent three months in Greece before beginning his homeward journey (Acts 20:2b–3a). We surmise that during his stay in Greece (most likely at Corinth, see 2 Cor 13:1, 10), Paul wrote his letter to the Romans. This is suggested by the fact that Paul commends to the Romans a woman, Phoebe, from Cenchrea, a seaport adjacent to Corinth (Rom 16:1–2). Moreover, the Gaius with whom Paul is apparently staying (Rom 16:23) is probably the same Gaius whom Paul baptized at Corinth (1 Cor 1:14). It is also likely (while by no means certain) that “Erastus the city treasurer” (*polis oikonomos*) is the same Erastus who is identified in an inscription as an *aedile* [city commissioner] at Corinth (Rom 16:23).¹

¹ Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICOT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996): 2–3.