

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

Acts 20:2b–3a

2b he [*Paul*] came to Greece,
3a where he stayed for 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 From Paul, a slave of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God.
2 This gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures,
3 concerning his Son who was a descendant of David with reference to the flesh,
4 who was appointed the Son-of-God-in-power according to the Holy Spirit by the resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord.
5 Through him we have received grace and our apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles on behalf of his name.
6 You also are among them, called to belong to Jesus Christ.
7 To all those loved by God in Rome, called to be saints: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ!

Thanksgiving and Occasion—Paul's Burden for Rome

8 First of all, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed throughout the whole world.
9 For God, whom I serve in my spirit by preaching the gospel of his Son, is my witness that I continually remember you
10 and I always ask in my prayers, if perhaps now at last I may succeed in visiting you according to the will of God.
11 For I long to see you, so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you,
12 that is, that we may be mutually comforted by one another's faith, both yours and mine.
13 I do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, that I often intended to come to you (and was prevented until now), so that I may have some fruit even among you, just as I already have among the rest of the Gentiles.
14 I am a debtor both to the Greeks and to the barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish.
15 Thus I am eager also to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome.

Theme Statement

16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is God's power for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.
17 For the righteousness of God is revealed in the gospel from faith to faith, just as it is written, "*The 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 ungodliness and unrighteousness of people who suppress the truth by their unrighteousness,
19 because what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them.
20 For since the creation of the world his invisible attributes—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, because they are understood through what has been made. So people are without excuse.
21 For although they knew God, they did not glorify him as God or give him thanks, but they became futile in their thoughts and their senseless hearts were darkened.
22 Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools
23 and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for an image resembling mortal human beings or birds or four-footed animals or reptiles.
24 Therefore God gave them over in the desires of their hearts to impurity, to dishonor their bodies among themselves.
25 They exchanged the truth of God for a lie and worshiped and served the creation rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.
26 For this reason God gave them over to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged the natural sexual relations for unnatural ones,
27 and likewise the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed in their passions for one another. Men committed shameless acts with men and received in themselves the due penalty for their error.
28 And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what should not be done.
29 They are filled with every kind of unrighteousness, wickedness, covetousness, malice. They are rife with envy, murder, strife, deceit, hostility. They are gossips,
30 slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, contrivers of all sorts of evil, disobedient to parents,
31 senseless, covenant-breakers, heartless, ruthless.

32 Although they fully know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but also approve of those who practice them.

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

2:1 Therefore you are without excuse, whoever you are, when you judge someone else. For on whatever grounds you judge another, you condemn yourself, because you who judge practice the same things.

2 Now we know that God's judgment is in accordance with truth against those who practice such things.

3 And do you think, whoever you are, when you judge those who practice such things and yet do them yourself, that you will escape God's judgment?

4 Or do you have contempt for the wealth of his kindness, forbearance, and patience, and yet do not know that God's kindness leads you to repentance?

5 But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath for yourselves in the day of wrath, when God's righteous judgment is revealed!

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

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

8 but wrath and anger to those who live in selfish ambition and do not obey the truth but follow unrighteousness.

9 There will be affliction and distress on everyone who does evil, on the Jew first and also the Greek,

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

11 For there is no partiality with God.

12 For all who have sinned apart from the law will also perish apart from the law, and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law.

13 For it is not those who hear the law who are righteous before God, but those who do the law will be declared righteous.

14 For whenever the Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature the things required by the law, these who do not have the law are a law to themselves.

15 They show that the work of the law is written in their hearts, as their conscience bears witness and their conflicting thoughts accuse or else defend them,

16 on the day when God will judge the secrets of human hearts, 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 of your relationship to God

18 and know his will and approve the superior things because you receive instruction from the law,

19 and if you are convinced that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness,

20 an educator of the senseless, a teacher of little children, because you have in the law the essential features of knowledge and of the truth—

21 therefore you who teach someone else, do you not teach yourself? You who preach against stealing, do you steal?

22 You who tell others not to commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples?

23 You who boast in the law dishonor God by transgressing the law!

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

25 For circumcision has its value if you practice the law, but if you break the law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision.

26 Therefore if the uncircumcised man obeys the righteous requirements of the law, will not his uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision?

27 And will not the physically uncircumcised man who keeps the law judge you who, despite the written code and circumcision, transgress the law?

28 For a person is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision something that is outward in the flesh,

29 but someone is a Jew who is one inwardly, and circumcision is of the heart by the Spirit and not by the written code. This person's praise is not from people but from God.

Paul Answers the Objections of the Jews

3:1 Therefore what advantage does the Jew have, or what is the value of circumcision?

2 Actually, there are many advantages. First of all, the Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God.

3 What then? If some did not believe, does their unbelief nullify the faithfulness of God?

4 Absolutely not! Let God be proven true, and every human being shown up as a liar, just as it is written: "*so that you will be justified in your words and will prevail when you are judged.*" [[Ps 51:4](#)]

5 But if our unrighteousness demonstrates the righteousness of God, what shall we say? The God who inflicts wrath is not unrighteous, is he? (I am speaking in human terms.)

6 Absolutely not! For otherwise how could God judge the world?

7 For if by my lie the truth of God enhances his glory, why am I still actually being judged as a sinner?

8 And why not say, "Let us do evil so that good may come of it"?—as some who slander us allege that we say. (Their condemnation

is deserved!)

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

9 What then? Are we better off? Certainly not, for we have already charged that Jews and Greeks alike are all under sin, 10 just as it is written:

- 11 *“There is no one righteous, not even one,
there is no one who understands,
there is no one who seeks God.*
- 12 *All have turned away,
together they have become worthless;
there is no one who shows kindness, not even one.”* [[Ps 14:1–3](#)]
- 13 *“Their throats are open graves,
they deceive with their tongues, [[Ps 5:9](#)]
the poison of asps is under their lips.”* [[Ps 140:3](#)]
- 14 *“Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness.”* [[Ps 10:7](#)]
- 15 *“Their feet are swift to shed blood,
16 ruin and misery are in their paths,
17 and the way of peace they have not known.”* [[Isa 59:7–8](#)]
- 18 *“There is no fear of God before their eyes.”* [[Ps 36:1](#)]

19 Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world may be held accountable to God.

20 For *no one is declared righteous before him* [[Ps 143:2](#)] by the works of the law, for through the law comes the 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 (which is attested by the law and the prophets) has been disclosed— 22 namely, the righteousness of God through the faithfulness of Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction, 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

24 But they are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

25 God publicly displayed him at his death as the mercy seat accessible through faith. This was to demonstrate his righteousness, because God in his forbearance had passed over the sins previously committed.

26 This was also to demonstrate his righteousness in the present time, so that he would be just and the justifier of the one who lives because of Jesus’ faithfulness.

Claim—We are Justified by Faith Apart from Works

27 Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded! By what principle? Of works? No, but by the principle of faith!

28 For we consider that a person is declared righteous by faith apart from the works of the law.

29 Or is God the God of the Jews only? Is he not the God of the Gentiles too? Yes, of the Gentiles too!

30 Since God is one, he will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith.

31 Do we then nullify the law through faith? Absolutely not! Instead 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 discovered regarding this matter?

2 For if Abraham was declared righteous by the works of the law, he has something to boast about—but not before God.

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

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

5 But to the one who does not work, but believes in the one who declares the ungodly righteous, his faith is credited as righteousness.

6 So even David himself speaks regarding the blessedness of the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works:

7 *“Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered;*

8 *blessed is the one against whom the Lord will never count sin.”* [[Ps 32:1–2](#)]

Supporting Argument—Abraham was Justified by Grace, Not Law

9 Is this blessedness then for the circumcision or also for the uncircumcision? For we say, *“faith was credited to Abraham as righteousness.”* [[Gen 15:6](#)]

10 How then was it credited to him? Was he circumcised at the time, or not? No, he was not circumcised but uncircumcised!

11 And he received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised, so that he would become the father of all those who believe but have never been circumcised, that they too could have righteousness credited to them. [cf. [Gen 17](#)]

12 And he is also the father of the circumcised, who are not only circumcised, but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham possessed when he was still uncircumcised.

13 For the promise to Abraham or to his descendants that he would inherit the world was not fulfilled through the law, but through the righteousness that comes by faith.

14 For if they become heirs by the law, faith is empty and the promise is nullified.

15 For the law brings wrath, because where there is no law there is no transgression either.

16 For this reason it is by faith so that it may be by grace, with the result that the promise may be certain to all the descendants—not only to those who are under the law, but also to those who have the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all

17 (as it is written, “*I have made you the father of many nations*”). [[Gen 17:5](#)] He is our father in the presence of God whom he believed—the God who makes the dead alive and summons the things that do not yet exist as though they already do.

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

18 Against hope Abraham believed in hope with the result that he became *the father of many nations* according to the pronouncement, “*so will your descendants be.*” [[Gen 15:5](#)]

19 Without being weak in faith, he considered his own body as dead (because he was about one hundred years old) and the deadness of Sarah’s womb.

20 He did not waver in unbelief about the promise of God but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God.

21 He was fully convinced that what God promised he was also able to do.

22 So indeed it was credited to Abraham as righteousness.

23 But the statement *it was credited to him* was not written only for Abraham’s sake,

24 but also for our sake, to whom it will be credited, those who believe in the one who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead.

25 He was given over because of our transgressions and was raised for the sake 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.