

**THE LETTER OF PAUL TO THE ROMANS**

*Lesson 2 – Study Questions*

*Romans 1:1-17*

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**Review:** *From your experience at the Cornerstone meeting last week, share something that helped build your faith.*

*Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ! (Romans 1:7)*

Paul's greeting is a wonderful way to begin our study of Romans, one of the 13 epistles in the New Testament attributed to Paul (some scholars include Hebrews as the 14<sup>th</sup>). "Most scholars agree that Romans is the crown jewel of the Pauline Epistles. It is one of the fullest and richest expositions of the Christian gospel ever captured in writing;" *ROMANS, Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture, Scott W. Hahn & Curtis Mitch*

Among the themes in Romans are God's righteousness, the grace of salvation, sin and the requirements of living as a Christian, and Paul's reflections on what Jesus means to us in daily life. Romans, though short, is a challenging study. Buckle your seat belts!

This book of the Bible – the inspired Word of God - is not only a guide for Christian living, but also a source of comfort, encouragement, instruction and inspiration. Throughout this study of Romans there will be verses that have

been designated as “Good Memory Verses.” To learn these and other verses by heart makes the Scriptures come alive and immediately applicable to us as we go through our daily lives.

### **DAY ONE**

**Read Romans 1:1-2**

1. In verse 1 Paul introduces himself to the Romans. At the time of Paul, most people did not have last names. They were often identified by a city, e.g., Joseph of Arimathea. Why do you think he did not refer to himself as “Paul of Tarsus”?

2. Paul continues by identifying himself as a servant of Christ, called and set apart for the gospel. Look up the definitions of servant and record the definition that best fits Paul’s declaration (note that some translations use the word “slave” instead of servant).

3. Read a few of these passages and record the names of some others who are identified as servants of God.

Judges 2:8

1 Kings 18:12

Psalm 105:42

**THINK:** In what ways are you a servant of Christ? How has this changed over your faith journey?

4. Paul immediately confirms that the gospel was promised by prophets of old, in what we now call the Old Testament. “In fact, one of Paul’s aims in Romans is to show that his preaching is fully in line with the Scriptures of Israel, all of which prepare for this climax of history in some way or another.” *Hahn & Mitch* Record Isaiah 9:5-6 or Hosea 3:5 as an example.

5. An apostle (from the Greek *apostello*) generally means one who is dispatched on a mission, especially those called to spread the good news. While apostle is usually applied to the original twelve, often Paul is included. Why do you think Paul is most often described as an apostle rather than a disciple? (see 1 Corinthians 9:1 or Acts 9)

6. CONNECTION: Like Paul, we too are called to share what God has done in our lives and for the entire world. Our daily interactions can lead us to opportunities for evangelization through word, action, or prayer. Cathy Duffy in her book Everyday Evangelism for Catholics tells us that evangelization often begins with listening, a cornerstone of all good relationships. Share with your small group ways in which you currently (or may in the future) respond to God’s call to spread the gospel.

Read and record Isaiah 6:8. Let these words of Isaiah be your words as you begin to pray.

## DAY TWO

### Read Romans 1:3-6

7. Romans 1:3-4 are the core of what Paul's future teaching regarding the gospel will be. Summarize what Paul proclaims about Jesus in these verses.

8. Our Commentary (page 9) states that verse 4 introduces one of the major themes which Paul will develop: that is, that salvation comes through faith in the person of Jesus Christ. Through his death and resurrection, our redemption was accomplished. Briefly note Msgr. Mikesch's caution regarding misinterpretation of this verse.

9. According to verse 5, Paul (and other apostles) has received grace and apostleship. For what purpose has he received these gifts?

10. There are many different thoughts about the definition of the word "grace." What does God's grace mean to you?

**NOTE:** Paul uses the words "the obedience of faith" in his purpose statement, a theme that can be understood in different ways. It could mean "the obedience that flows FROM faith" or "the obedience that IS faith. Faith and obedience go together in Pauline preaching, just as they do in real life." *Hahn & Mitch*

**THINK:** What would you consider a disobedience of faith?

11. In verse 6 Paul tells the Romans, and us, that we have each been called (set apart) to belong to Jesus Christ. Read Psalm 139:13-18 and record a favorite verse among the ways the psalmist describes the beginning of our relationship with God.

12. CONNECTION: We know that faith is a gift from God. The seed of faith is planted at our baptism, but that seed is watered and nurtured by many people we encounter in our lives. Name several people who have shared their faith with you and record a few words about how they served as apostles to you.

Read 1 Thessalonians 1:1-3. Let Paul's words lead you into prayer, as you remember with thanks those apostles you mentioned above.

### **DAY THREE**

**Read Romans 1:7-10**

13. The first verses of this letter are Paul introducing himself to the Roman Christian community, which he had not met. In today's passage, Paul speaks directly to them, calling them "God's beloved" and speaking not of a call to apostleship, but of a different call. What is the call and what do you think it means?

14. In verse 7 Paul offers them grace and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. From the Commentary, page 9, record the Hebrew definition of peace.

15. In verse 8 Paul gives the Romans a compliment. In your own words, what does he say to them about their faith?

16. In the process of complimenting them, Paul builds their confidence, enabling them to accomplish even more. Can you think of a time when someone's confidence in you helped you to accomplish a goal?

17. In verses 9-10 Paul assures the Romans that he remembers them always in his prayers and hopes to come to them soon. If you were a Roman Christian, describe what your attitude might have been toward Paul, a man you had never met, after reading verses 8-10.

18. CONNECTION: In today's passage, Paul consciously recognizes the goodness which God has placed within the Roman Christian community. Their faith was proclaimed throughout the world. There are many people in the world whose faith we may have witnessed – Saint Pope John Paul II, Saint Teresa of Calcutta, Saint Teresa of Avila, and so on. While we know of these people from afar, we can still pray with and for them and acknowledge their faith works. Share with your small group a favorite saint or religious figure, and in what ways, large or small, they impact your life.

If your saint has a favorite prayer or saying, record it and let their words be your prayer for the day. If not, write your own prayer thanking your favorite saint for the positive way they have influenced your life.

#### **DAY FOUR**

**Read Romans 1:11-12**

19. Paul continues his letter telling the Romans that he is “longing to see you.” What reason does he give for this?

20. The word “longing” implies a yearning for something that may be unattainable. This is an intense and emotional word used more often in the Old Testament than in the New Testament but Paul uses it a number of times in his letters. He is expressing the love of Christ to them and the fellowship of love among Christians. Read and record Philippians 1:8.

21. As Paul continues in verse 12, what does he say they can share with each other?

22. Our tradition in the Catholic Church is to come together to celebrate the Eucharist. Our primary reason for this is to worship God. What other reason might come to mind based on Paul's thoughts in verse 12?

23. Refer to the Commentary, page 10, and note what Msgr. Mikesch believes is another reason Paul would indicate the need for mutual strengthening.

24. CONNECTION: In verse 12 Paul says, "...we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith." Paul so values his own gift of faith that his greatest desire is to continue to strengthen the faith of others. By offering such loving encouragement to the Romans, he does just that. Yesterday you thought of saints who have encouraged you in faith. In what way(s) does the fellowship of your Parish, or The Cornerstone, or another community encourage you?

Read and record 1 Thessalonians 5:11 and begin your prayer.

## DAY FIVE

Read Romans 1:13-15

25. As today's passage begins, Paul addresses the Romans as brothers and sisters. According to verse 13 what did he want them to know?

26. Why did he want to visit them?

27. Verse 13 also tells us that earlier Paul had intended to go to Rome but was prevented from making the trip. Read Acts 16:6-7 to find out what kept him from reaching Rome up to that point.

28. Possibly because of his dramatic conversion from being a Jewish persecutor of Christians to an apostle proclaiming the Good News, Paul feels that his mission is to preach to all kinds of people. In verse 14 he expresses his obligation to two contrasting pairs. Who are they?

**NOTE:** As a result of Alexander's conquests, Greek became the standard international language of the Mediterranean world. Greeks in Paul's statement therefore means people who know Greek or who have been influenced by Greek culture. Non-Greeks were people whose cultures remained substantially unaffected by Greek influences. Greeks called such people "barbarians" (cf. Acts 28:2); meaning people whose speech was foreign. Roman citizens would scarcely classify themselves as such, and Nero, who was reigning when Paul wrote this letter, prided himself on his admiration for Greek culture. *USCCB, Book of Romans*

29. In the Nicene Creed (which we profess at Mass) we speak of what are called the four marks of the Church: “one, holy, catholic and apostolic.” The term catholic does not mean Roman Catholic, but rather universal. The Church is open to everyone. How does this relate to Paul’s words in today’s passage?

30. CONNECTION: At the end of today’s passage (verse 15) we again feel Paul’s excitement and intensity. He is aware of the gift God has given him and, as a result, is overwhelmed by the desire to share the gospel with Jews and Gentiles. Read Isaiah 11:2-3, and then identify one gift you feel the Lord has given you. When have you, like Paul, had a tremendous need or desire to use that gift, sharing it with someone else? Describe some details.

Realize that like Paul, you were moved by the Holy Spirit to reach out and to share what had been given to you as gift. Let this thought lead you into prayer.

#### **DAY SIX**

**Read Romans 1:16-17**

31. Today’s passage opens with Paul telling us he is “not ashamed of the gospel.” Why do you think he felt it necessary to say that?

32. In Paul's way of thinking, the gospel is not just a story, nor is it simply a record of miracles or a collection of parables. What does he say the gospel is according to the middle of verse 16?

33. At the end of verse 16 Paul says that the message of the gospel went to the Jews first. Refer to Deuteronomy 7:7-8 and in your own words explain why (or why not) the Jews deserve to be the chosen ones.

34. In verse 17 Paul says that "the righteousness of God" is revealed through and for what?

35. The end of verse 17 contains the phrase, "as it is written," followed by a quotation. To find where those words were originally written, turn to Habakkuk 2:4. What more do you find in this verse concerning the words of the quote cited by Paul?

36. CONNECTION: In the two verses that make up today's passage, Paul uses the word "faith" several times. Faith is a word with many layers of meanings. It can mean steadfast loyalty, total belief, indestructible hope, absolute trust, and other definitions. Take one of these definitions (or write one of your own) and explain how it clarifies your understanding of "faith."

Read Msgr. Mikesch's explanation of "faith for faith" in the Commentary and write a prayer today thanking Jesus for his great gift of love for you.

Read pages 8-12 in the Commentary by Rev. Msgr. Gregory R. Mikesch, M. Div., M.A. The Cornerstone Catholic Scripture Study acknowledges that scripture quotations in this study are from the New Revised Standard Version Bible, Catholic Edition. Copyright 1989, Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

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