

ROMANS 1:8-15 | THE APOSTLE'S DESIRE: A SPIRITUAL GIFT

Supplemental: Romans Graphically Presented, pg. 8

ROMANS 1:8 | YOUR FAITH

VERSE 8 - BLACK

Paul is most grateful to God for the Romans, especially that their **faith is spoken of throughout the whole world**. This dramatic phrase is restated in Romans 16:19. Could it be possible that the **whole world** knew and spoke about the faith of these Jewish Roman believers? I will simply take Paul at his word, believing that some course of events has taken place that brought this particular group of Messianic Jews into international prominence. This doesn't require that *every person* knows about the Roman believers, but certainly in *every place* there is some knowledge. Whatever the cause, Paul is grateful that their faith has come into prominence.

The prominence also makes this epistle all-the-more important at the time of writing. The Roman congregation of believing Jews is undoubtedly influential throughout both the Jewish and the Gentile world. What better group with whom to give a theological explanation of God's latest revelation?

ROMANS 1:9-10 | PAUL'S TESTIMONY

VERSE 9 – BLACK

Paul joins with a worldwide audience to join in praise of the Roman congregation. He mentions, specifically, that he serves God **with my spirit**. This is not the Holy Spirit, but Paul's spirit. Paul used the same Greek phrase in 2 Corinthians 2:13 (**I had no rest in my spirit**). We might say, "I gave it my all," or "I serve with every breath I have."

Paul's "full-spirit" service is **in the gospel of his Son**. There is no reason to believe that this gospel is any different than in the previous verses, namely, the Kingdom Gospel.

Just as **throughout the whole world** (v. 8) can be taken literally without requiring inclusion of every individual, so **without ceasing** can be taken literally without including every moment. As Paul prayed, he always prayed for the Romans.

VERSE 10 – BLACK

Paul's never-ending **request** when he prays for the Romans is that he might be able to make a visit. Not making the visit, however, will not stop him from sharing the information concerning the mystery, for he shall share it in this epistle.

ROMANS 1:11 | A SPIRITUAL GIFT

VERSE 11 – BLACK

While Paul would rather share the information he is about to share in person, his desire to **impart...some spiritual gift** is so strong that he will do so by epistle.

This **spiritual gift** is one that will work **to the end you may be established**. And what might that **spiritual gift** be? It is of interest that Paul uses the same Greek word (στηρίζω [sterizo]) in Romans 16:25, speaking of **him that is of the power to stablish you**. This *strength of standing* would come **according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery** (Rom. 16:25).

Could it be that Paul is announcing that he wants to *share the mystery given to him*, and that it is this message which would *establish* them? This, of course, would imply that they did not yet know this message. Despite knowing about Jesus, believing Him to be the Christ, and likely even having experienced the

Pentecostal work of the Holy Spirit, they are still *Kingdom-only* believers. Paul knows that they will be *confused* rather than **established** if he does not explain the new revelation.

It is my contention that such explanation is the purpose of the book of Romans. Furthermore, that *unless one understands the mystery he or she is wandering in confusion*. Today, we share the Pauline message so that those who hear us **may be established**.

If my contention is correct, then this would put the Roman believers in the same position as Apollos. He was **mighty in the scriptures** (Acts 18:24) but did not of the Pauline message. After learning this, he was able to be of great service to those **which had believed through grace** (Acts 18:27). If we use Usher's dating, this was about A.D. 56, with the writing of Romans just a few years later (A.D. 58-60). Such timing seems reasonable.

ROMANS 1:12-15 | THE DESIRED MANIFESTATION OF PAULINE TRUTH WORLDWIDE

VERSE 12 – BLACK

Paul's desire is that the Romans would have a **mutual faith**, and so we must presume that *at the time of the writing the faith was not held in common*. The difference between *his faith* and *the Roman's faith* was not related to Jesus Christ, for they both believed Him to be the Messiah who had died, risen, and ascended to heaven to return someday. The difference was that the Romans only knew about the **gospel of God** (Rom. 1:1) whereas Paul also knew about **the dispensation of the grace of God** (Eph. 3:2), which Paul would later call *my Gospel*.

VERSE 13 - BLACK

Paul desires that the Romans understand that **oftentimes** he had planned to make a visit but **was let hitherto**. The parenthetical phrase is difficult for modern ears. The Greek is κωλύω [kuluō], which means *hinder*. So why does the King James Bible use the word **let**? How can a word which means *given permission* come to mean *not given permission*? The Oxford English Dictionary has two entries for the verb *let*, the second is, "To hinder, prevent, obstruct, stand in the way of (a person, thing, action, etc.)."¹ It is this archaic usage used in verse 13.

Paul's desire is to **have some fruit among you**, doubtless speaking of spiritual fruit. He claims that he has had fruit **among other Gentiles**. There are those who may use this last phrase as "proof" that the Roman audience is *not* Jews, but Gentiles. However, one must remember that the Greek ἔθνος [ethnos] is most literally, "among other *nations*." Even if taken to be *the uncircumcised*, this verse would not prove the uncircumcision of the Roman audience, only that Paul had had some fruit among an uncircumcised audience in other locations. Furthermore, Romans 2:17 would argue against any conclusion that said the recipients are uncircumcised.

VERSES 14-15 – BLACK

Paul claims to be a **debtor** to all, mentioning **Greeks** and **Barbarians** as well as **wise** and **unwise**. He likely mentions these social groups simply as a means of displaying his obligation to all people. And being a **debtor** to all, he is eager to go to **Rome also**.

ROMANS 1:16-17 | AN UNASHAMED APOSTLE

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VERSE 16 – BLACK

I am convinced that Paul is stating upfront that he is not ashamed of *the Kingdom gospel*. The **gospel of Christ** is the good news of the Messiah. It is this gospel (and only this gospel) that is **to the Jew first**. For how could a gospel in which there is **neither Jew nor Greek** (Gal. 3:28) have a need to go **to the Jew first**?

¹ "let, v.2." *OED Online*. Oxford University Press, September 2022. Web. 27 October 2022.

The Gospel of the Messiah was absolutely to go **to the Jew first**. See, for example, Acts 3:25-26. And Acts 13:46 says that it was **necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you**. The necessity was due to all the covenant promises and prophecies. So, **to the Jew first** is not just a kind word expressing what *had happened* but was expressing what *must have happen*. The nations would be blessed *only through redeemed Israel*.

After the Jewish nation rejected the **gospel of Christ**, the nation began a diminishing which took place over the course of the Pauline epistles, in which Israel had a diminishing role in the work of God. In our day, we *must not put anyone first* in priority to receive the Gospel (see Rom. 10:12).

Note: the modern versions omit the words **of Christ**. In doing so they make it more likely that the student of Scripture will misinterpret this passage.

VERSE 17 – BLACK

The word **therein** refers to **the gospel of Christ**. It is in this Messianic gospel that **the righteousness of God is revealed**.

The revelation happens **from faith to faith**. This is a difficult phrase, perhaps indicating that *only those with faith will be able to see it*.

The use of Habakkuk 2:4 indicates that *the mystery message is not in view*, as it was not known in Habakkuk's day. Rather, the context of Habakkuk 2 is the judgment taking place at the beginning of the Messianic age.