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# THE GRACE BIBLE

# ROMANS 1

**SAMPLE CHAPTER**

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## What is The Grace Bible?

My only aim is to complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the good news of God’s grace.  
(Acts 20:24)

The good news of God’s grace declares that God is not mad at you, he’s mad about you. The One who sits on a throne of grace blesses you, not because you are good, but because he is good and he longs to be good to you.

Grace declares that God is for us and with us, and he freely gives us everything we need for life and godliness. Grace invites you to come in from the cold, rest from your labors, and feast at the table of his abundance. Grace is what makes the new covenant new and the good news *good news*.

If you have ever asked, “How do I read this scripture through a new covenant lens?” *The Grace Bible* is for you.

This book is not a law Bible with rules to follow, nor is it a works Bible that tells you what to do. It is not a judgment Bible to fear, or a guilt Bible to make you feel bad. It is a *grace* Bible that reveals the good news found on every page of scripture.

In this study Bible, you will find no guilt or condemnation and none of the usual calls for blood, sweat, and tears. Our focus will be on Jesus Christ—who he is, what he has done, and what you can do because of what he has done.

*The Grace Bible* is for the weary and those tired of pretending. It’s for the burned out, the fed up, and the knocked down. It’s for those who are in distress, or debt, or are discontented.

It’s for all of us who need grace.

## Romans 1

### Romans 1:1

<sup>1</sup> Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God,

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1:1 **Paul.** Paul's Jewish name was Saul, but in his letter to the Romans, he uses his Roman name (see Acts 13:9). The name Paulus or Paul means "little," which is an apt name for someone who understood that God chooses the least, the last, and the weakest to display his glory (1 Cor. 1:27).

**Bond-servant.** In some of his letters, Paul introduces himself as a bond-servant or slave (*doulos*) of Christ (Rom 1:1, Gal 1:10, Tit 1:1), while colleagues are sometimes introduced as fellow bond-servants or co-slaves (*syndoulos*) (e.g., Col. 1:7, 4:7). Peter (2 Pet 1:1), James (Jas 1:1), and Jude (Jude 1:1) also saw themselves as bond-servants or slaves of Christ.

The children of God are not slaves. In the New Testament, the word "slave" has a broad meaning and a slave can be a high official in the service of a king (Matt. 18:23). When the apostles identify themselves as servants or slaves of Christ, they are saying, "We are the sons of God who serve in the manner in which Christ served," meaning they served others (2 Cor. 4:5). They did not serve to curry favor with God but to reveal the Servant-king. "For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all, so that I may win more" (1 Cor. 9:19).

**Christ Jesus.** The original word *Christos* is the Greek word for "Messiah" (John 1:41) and means "anointed one." To refer to Jesus as *Christ*, which Paul does more than sixty times in this letter, is to recognize that he is the anointed King foretold by the prophets (Ps. 2:2, Dan. 9:25–26). Paul refers to Jesus as Christ in all his letters (e.g., Rom. 1:4, 1 Cor. 1:1, 2 Cor. 1:2, Gal. 1:1, Php. 1:2, Col. 1:1, 1 Th. 1:1, 2 Th. 1:2, 1 Tim. 1:16, 2 Tim. 2:8, Tit. 3:6, Phm. 1:3).

**An apostle.** The original noun *apostolos* means a “delegate” or “ambassador.” It is someone who has been sent out as a messenger for God. Paul was “an apostle of Gentiles” (Rom. 11:13), meaning God had sent him to preach the good news to the Gentiles (Gal 1:15–16, 2:9, Eph. 3:8). Although we have all been called to proclaim the good news, those with an apostolic gifting excel in this activity and are able to train others for ministry (Eph. 4:11–12). Paul was also known as an “apostle of Christ Jesus,” meaning he had been sent by Christ to speak the words of Christ (2 Cor. 5:20). His commission and message came from the Lord and no man (Gal. 1:1).

**Set apart.** Paul was chosen by God for the work of proclaiming the gospel (Acts 13:2).

Paul is enjoying a little wordplay. Once upon a time, Paul had been a Pharisee or a “separated one.” (The word for Pharisee is derived from the Hebrew word *parash*, meaning “to separate” or “set apart.”) As a Pharisee, he was set apart to teach the law. But now, as an apostle, he was set apart to proclaim the good news of grace.

**The gospel.** Paul introduces himself as a herald of the gospel of God. He is staking a claim to the word *euangelion*, which means “good news” or “glad tidings.” It’s a word the Romans used to herald important events, such as an emperor’s ascension or birthday. In Rome, there were some who revered the emperor as a god or a son of a god. Paul is saying, “I want to tell you the good news of a great King who is the true Son of God.”

The word *euangelion* appears nine times in the letter to the Romans. It is usually translated as “gospel” (Rom. 1:1, 9, 16, 2:16, 11:28, 15:16, 19, 16:25), but on one occasion it is rendered as “good news” (Rom. 10:16).

**The gospel of God** reveals the righteousness of God which was demonstrated on the cross (Rom. 1:17, 3:25). As foretold by the prophets (verse 2), God sent his Son (verse 3), and raised him from the dead (verse 4). While we were his enemies, he removed the barrier of sin paving the way for us

to be reconciled and adopted into his new creation family (Rom. 5:10, 8:15). In doing this, God reveals his unconditional love for us (Rom. 5:5, 8, 8:35, 37–39), the free gift of his righteousness (Rom. 1:17, 5:17–18), and the justification that comes through faith (Rom. 3:24, 26, 28).

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### Romans 1:2–4

<sup>2</sup> which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, <sup>3</sup> concerning his Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh, <sup>4</sup> who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord,

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1:2 **He promised.** What God promised through his prophets was a Deliverer. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, did not step onto the stage of human history unannounced. His coming was first proclaimed to Adam and Eve when the Lord told Eve her Seed would bring deliverance (Gen 3:15). God also spoke of a coming Seed or Savior when he said to Abraham, “Through your Seed, all the nations will be blessed” (Gen. 22:18, Gal. 3:8, 16). And the coming of a Messiah was proclaimed by every Old Testament prophet from Joel (2:32) to Jeremiah (23:5–6).

**Scriptures.** The Hebrew Scriptures, a.k.a. the Old Testament, which contain the Law of Moses, the psalms, and the prophets. The holy Scriptures reveal the good news of Jesus Christ (Luke 24:47).

1:3 **Concerning his Son.** The gospel of God is that the old prophecies have been fulfilled—the Savior and Son of God has come!

**A descendant of David.** Unlike the Roman emperors, of which there had been only a handful, Jesus came from a royal line stretching back nearly 1000 years. His lineage confirmed the Jews’ belief that the Messiah would come

from the line of King David (Matt. 22:42). Jesus was the fulfillment of that belief. “Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, descendant of David, according to my gospel” (2 Tim. 2:8).

**David.** God promised David that the Messiah would come from his line (2 Sam. 7:12–13, Ps. 132:11). This promise was confirmed in the prophets (Is. 9:6–7, Jer. 23:5–6) and fulfilled in the Gospels (Matt. 1:1, 22:42, Mark 12:35, Luke 1:32, John 7:42).

**Born... according to the flesh.** This verse is one of only two times where Paul directly mentions the birth of Jesus. (The other occasion is Gal. 4:4.) Paul’s primary emphasis was Christ’s death and resurrection.

- 1:4 **Declared the Son of God.** Jesus was always God’s Son, but we did not know for certain that he was God’s Son until God raised him from the dead. Jesus called himself the Son of God (Luke 22:70, Rev. 2:18) and the Gospels were written so that you might believe that he is the Son of God (John 20:31). Paul refers to Jesus as the Son of God seven times in this letter (Rom. 1:3–4, 9, 5:10, 8:3, 29, 32). In contrast, the unbelieving Jews doubted Jesus’s sonship (Matt. 27:40, John 19:7), and the devil openly questioned it. “If you are the Son of God” (Matt. 4:3).

**Power;** see entry for Rom. 1:16.

**Resurrection.** The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the pivotal event in history. No king or Caesar ever rose from the dead, but the Author of Life conquered the grave and now holds the keys of death and Hades (Rev. 1:18). Jesus Christ has broken the power of death and is able to give new life to all who come to him.

The resurrection of Christ was not a one-off miracle but Day One of a brand new creation (Rom. 6:4–5, 1 Cor. 15:20–22, 35–49). When we put our faith in the Risen Lord, we are transferred out of death row (the old creation) and into new life (the new creation).

**According to the Spirit of holiness.** Both God the Father and God the Holy Spirit confirmed the authority and

divinity of Jesus. Jesus Christ ministered in the power of the Spirit (Luke 4:18, Acts 10:38) and was raised by the Spirit (Rom. 8:11).

**Lord.** The Jews called Jesus “rabbi,” but Christians call him “Lord” (Rom. 10:9).

The original noun *kyrios* means “the One who is supreme above all rule, authority, power, and dominion” (Eph. 1:21). When Jesus walked the earth, he was known as Jesus of Nazareth (e.g., Matt. 26:71). But after he ascended to heaven he was given a new name above every name, and that name is “Lord” (Php. 2:9–11). “You call me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am” (John 13:13). Paul refers to Jesus Christ as Lord more than twenty times in this letter (Rom. 1:4, 7, 4:24, 5:1, 11, 21, 6:23, 7:25, 8:39, 10:9, 12–13, 13:14, 14:9, 14, 15:6, 30, 16:2, 18, 20, 24).

We are just four verses into this monumental letter, yet Paul has already revealed that Jesus is *the Christ*, *the Son of God*, and *the Lord*. The gospel does not present Jesus as a mere teacher or a baby in a manger. He is the Risen Lord, and all who call on him shall be saved (Rom. 10:9, 13).

## Romans 1:5–6

<sup>5</sup> through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for his name’s sake, <sup>6</sup> among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ;

**1:5 Through whom.** The grace and calling of God the Father come to us through a revelation of his Son. When we respond to Christ with faith, as Paul did, it changes everything. We find our lives realigning with the purposes of God. Prior to meeting Christ, Paul had no interest in the Gentiles. But after his encounter on the road to Damascus, he became an apostle to the Gentiles.

**We have received grace.** We are not chosen nor qualified as new covenant ministers on account of our pedigree or education. We are qualified by grace. “I was made a minister, according to the gift of God’s grace” (Eph. 3:7, ESV).

**Apostleship.** The original noun *apostolē* means a “commission” or “mission.” The leaders in the New Testament church recognized that Paul had been called and gifted by God to be an apostle and teacher to the Gentiles (Rom. 11:13, Gal. 2:7, 1 Tim. 2:7).

**Obedience** means “to listen and attend to”; see entry for Rom. 5:19.

**The obedience of faith.** Paul’s gift was helping people understand the gospel of Christ.

“The obedience of faith” can be read as “obedience to the faith,” where “the faith” is another name for the gospel of Christ (see Acts 6:7, Gal. 1:23). To obey or heed the gospel is to believe it. Paul preached the same message as Jesus; “Repent and believe the gospel” (Mark 1:15).

**Gentiles.** Non-Jews (Rom. 3:29). The original noun *ethnos* is related to the word “ethnic.” It can be translated as “Gentiles” or “nations” (e.g., Rom. 4:17, 18, 16:26).

**For his name’s sake.** We bring glory to God by bringing people to Jesus Christ.

Jesus died to save the world. The more people he saves, the more glory he receives. This is why Paul was delighted to preach to the Gentiles—there were so many—in places where the name of the Lord had not been heard (Rom 15:20).

1:6 **Among whom you also.** “You Romans are also part of my mission to the Gentiles.”

**The called of Jesus Christ.** The church. Through the gospel of Christ, God called you out of darkness and you responded (1 Pet. 2:9).

There is a misperception that God calls only a select few. But God calls all of us to himself, Jew and Gentile alike (Is. 45:22, Acts 17:30, Rom 9:24, 1 Cor. 1:24, 1 Tim. 2:3–4). His call is not based on our merits but his grace (Gal. 1:6, 2 Tim.



1:9). Not everyone responds to his call, but those who do are known as “the called of Jesus Christ” or simply “the called” (Jude 1:1).

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## Romans 1:7

<sup>7</sup> To all who are beloved of God in Rome, called as saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

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1:7 **Beloved.** The original adjective *agapētos* means “dearly loved, esteemed, favorite, and worthy of love.” It is closely related to a verb, *agapaō*, meaning “to be well pleased or fond of or contented.” This word captures God’s heart for you. Your heavenly Father is fond of you. You are his esteemed favorite and he is well pleased with you. He looks at you with a feeling of deep contentment, knowing that you are his dearly loved child.

God the Father referred to Jesus as “beloved” (Matt. 3:17), and all the epistle writers used this term to describe believers (Rom. 1:7, 12:19, 16:5, 1 Cor. 4:14, 10:14, 15:58, 2 Cor. 7:1, 12:19, Eph. 5:1, Php. 2:12, 4:1, Col. 1:7, 4:7, 9, 14, 2 Tim. 1:2, Phm. 1:1, 16, Heb. 6:9, Jas. 1:16, 19, 2:5, 1 Pet. 2:11, 4:12, 2 Pet. 3:1, 8, 14, 15, 17, 1 John 2:7, 3:2, 21, 4:1, 7, 11, 3 John 1:1, 2, 5, 11, Jude 1:1, 3, 17, 20).

**Beloved of God.** Your primary identity is not “lover of God” but “beloved of God.” You cannot fully love God until you have experienced his limitless love for you (see 1 John 4:19).

**Rome** was the capital city of the Roman Empire. No one knows who first brought the gospel to Rome, but there were “visitors from Rome” in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:10). It’s possible one of these unnamed visitors carried the gospel to Rome and planted a church.

Paul wrote his letter to the Romans while staying with Gaius in Corinth (Rom. 16:23). This was while Paul was in Greece

during his third missionary trip, around AD 54/56 (Acts 20:2–3). Since Paul was about to head back to Judea (Rome 15:25), he wrote a letter that was delivered to Rome by Phoebe of Cenchrea (Rom. 16:1).

**Called as saints.** Those who respond to the call of God (i.e., those who put their faith in Jesus Christ) are known as saints. You are not a forgiven sinner but a saint.

**Saints.** Christians. The word “saint” in popular culture is often used to describe a certain kind of *person* (e.g., a kind person or a miracle-worker). But in the New Testament, the word “saint” describes a new kind of *species*, namely the new creation (2 Cor. 5:17, Gal. 3:28). A saint is someone who has died, been buried, and raised to new life with Christ (Rom. 6:3–5, Eph. 2:5–6). A saint is no longer part of Adam’s family, but has become a member of God’s family and a co-heir with Christ (Rom. 8:17, Eph. 2:19, 3:6). Throughout the New Testament, Christians are consistently referred to as saints.

**Grace to you and peace.** Grace encompasses all of God’s blessings, while peace is the fruit of receiving his grace. Someone who relies on their works instead of his grace will have little peace because there is always more to be done.

Most of Paul’s letters begin with this grace and peace salutation or a variation on it (1 Cor. 1:3, 2 Cor. 1:2, Gal. 1:3, Eph. 1:2, Php. 1:2, Col. 1:2, 1 Th. 1:1, 2 Th. 1:2, 1 Tim. 1:2, 2 Tim. 1:2, Tit. 1:4, Phm. 1:3). Peter adopts a similar salutation in his two letters (1 Pet. 1:2, 2 Pet. 1:2), as does John (2 John 1:3, Rev. 1:4).

**Peace from God.** Peace is more than the absence of conflict. True peace is the rest and inner tranquility that results from harmony in our relationships with God and each other. True peace comes from knowing we have been made right with God (Rom. 5:1).

Since the fall of man, people have hidden from a God they perceive as angry. As sinners, we were alienated from God and hostile in our minds (Col. 1:21), but any enmity is from our side alone. Our Father’s heart is always for peace. We

saw ourselves as God's enemies, but God loves his enemies (Matt. 5:44). Our iniquities drove us from him (Is. 59:2), but God sent his Son to bring about our reconciliation (Rom. 5:10). When we receive peace from God, we can enjoy peace with God and each other.

**God our Father.** Like Jesus before him, Paul revealed a God who loves you like a Father (John 17:23). This was a stunning revelation at the time, and it remains shocking for many today. God is not the harsh and distant deity of the Old Testament. He is our Father who loves us, adopts us and teaches us to cry, "Abba, Father!" (Rom. 6:4, 8:15).

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### Romans 1:8

<sup>8</sup> First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, because your faith is being proclaimed throughout the whole world.

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1:8 **First.** "Let me say this first before I move on to the meat of my message."

**I thank my God.** When he wrote his letter, Paul had not been to Rome, yet he knew of the church and was friends with some of its members (see Rom. 16:3–15).

About six to eight years earlier, while visiting Corinth on his second missionary trip, Paul met two Jewish Christians from Rome. Aquila and Priscilla, along with every other Roman Jew, had been expelled by the emperor Claudius around AD 49 (Acts 18:2). According to Suetonius, the Jews were banished because they "constantly made disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus" (*Life of Claudius*, 25.4). If this Chrestus is Christos (Christ), as many scholars believe, it seems the Jewish community in Rome had been disrupted by the arrival of the gospel.

After Claudius died in AD 54, Rome allowed the Jews to return, and Aquila and Priscilla were among those who went back (see Rom. 16:3). Put the pieces together and we can see

that the Roman church began as a Jewish community. However, after the expulsion of the Jews, the church became predominantly Gentile. When the Jewish believers returned, it became a church of Jews and Gentiles. This explains why Paul emphasizes Jewish writings in this letter. He wants his Jewish readers to know the Gentiles were always included in God's promises to Abraham, and he wants his Gentile readers to know that the Jews are still beloved and called by God (see Rom. 11:28–29).

**Faith.** The original noun *pistis* means “persuasion” or “conviction.” It is related to the verb *peitho*, which means “to convince,” “win over,” or “persuade.” Faith is agreeing with God. It is being persuaded or fully convinced that God is who he says he is, has done what he said he's done, and will do what he has promised to do (Acts 28:24). Abraham, the believer and father of the faith, “was fully assured or persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised” (see Rom 4:21). Faith is not a work but a rest. Faith is being fully persuaded. When you are fully persuaded, you can rest. All of God's blessings, including forgiveness, salvation, righteousness, and sanctification, come to us freely by grace and are received by faith. Faith does not compel God to forgive us or sanctify us. But faith is the conduit through which grace flows (Eph. 2:8).

**The whole world.** A church in Rome—a city known for its wickedness and cruelty—was a sign to make you wonder. Rome was ruled by a tyrant who was revered as the divine “savior of the world.” Yet just a short distance from the emperor's palace, Christians were worshiping the true King and Lord of all.

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## Romans 1:9–10

<sup>9</sup> For God, whom I serve in my spirit in the *preaching of the* gospel of his Son, is my witness as to how unceasingly I make mention of

you,<sup>10</sup> always in my prayers making request, if perhaps now at last by the will of God I may succeed in coming to you.

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1:9 **Whom I serve in my spirit.** God is spirit, and we worship and serve him in spirit (see John 4:24). True service is not about external appearances or performance metrics. Spiritual service comes from the heart (1 Sam. 16:7).

**My spirit.** Your spirit is that part of you that makes you spiritually aware or God-conscious. For want of a better analogy, your spirit is like an antenna. Just as our physical bodies connect us to the physical realm, our spirits connect us to the spiritual realm. Just as we have natural senses (sight, smell, hearing, etc.), we have spiritual senses (e.g., intuition).

*Preaching of the.* The words are in italics to show they are not in the original text but have been added for clarity by translators. A literal reading is, “I serve in the gospel of his Son.” Paul’s service included preaching the gospel (Romans 1:15, 10:8, 15:19–20, 16:25).

**The gospel of his Son** is that Jesus Christ has risen from the dead (Rom. 1:4).

**My witness.** “As God is my witness, I am telling the truth.” The Roman believers might have been startled to hear what Paul was saying. The great apostle had never visited them, yet he was telling them that their faith was known all over the world (see previous verse) and that he was in the habit of praying for them. What a wonderful word of encouragement this would have been.

**I make mention of you.** Paul regularly prayed for the believers in Rome and other churches (Eph. 1:16, Php. 1:3, 1 Th. 1:2).

1:10 **Prayers.** Prayer is conversing with God. Prayer may take various forms (supplication, intercession, praying in a tongue, etc.), but it is usually accompanied with thanksgiving (Eph. 1:16, Col. 4:2).

**Making request.** The original verb *deomai* means “an earnest or urgent plea.” The word is sometimes translated as “be-seech” (Matt. 9:38), “beg” (2 Cor. 5:20), and “implore” (Luke 5:12).

**Now at last.** Paul wanted God to send him to Rome as soon as possible (Rom. 1:13, 15:23).

**Coming to you.** Paul was eager to visit the Christians in Rome, and his prayers were answered—although perhaps not in the manner he had imagined. After being charged with inciting a riot in Jerusalem, Paul was shipped off to Rome in chains. He lived under house arrest in Rome for two years (Acts 28:16, 30).

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## Romans 1:11–12

<sup>11</sup> For I long to see you so that I may impart some spiritual gift to you, that you may be established; <sup>12</sup> that is, that I may be encouraged together with you while among you, each of us by the other’s faith, both yours and mine.

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1:11 **Impart** or share, not give. Spiritual gifts come from the Lord, not Paul. One way that gifts are imparted is through the laying on of hands (1 Tim. 4:14).

**Spiritual** means having to do with the spiritual realm as opposed to the natural or physical realm (1 Cor. 15:46). This is the first time the adjective *pneumatikos* appears in scripture. It is a post-Pentecost word that does not appear in the Gospels.

**Spiritual gift.** Spiritual gifts include wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, miracles, prophecy, discerning of spirits, speaking in tongues, and interpreting tongues (1 Cor. 12:8–10).

**Gift.** The original noun *charisma* is related to the word for grace (*charis*). Spiritual gifts are bestowed freely and cannot be earned.

**Established.** The original verb *stêrizō* means “to fix” or “set firmly in place.” The purpose of spiritual gifts is to strengthen the church and make you unshakeable in the faith (1 Cor. 14:3–4).

- 1:12 **Encouraged together.** Paul expected a visit to the church in Rome would be mutually encouraging for them and himself. Paul wanted to bless the Roman Christians with spiritual gifts, and he expected to be blessed by them. This is how the church functions. God gives us gifts that are not for our exclusive use but which are intended to build up the body of Christ (Rom. 14:19, 1 Cor. 14:12).

**Each of us by the other’s faith.** There is no hierarchy in the kingdom of grace. The newest believer has the same access by faith to the grace of God as the most seasoned apostle.

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### Romans 1:13–15

<sup>13</sup> I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that often I have planned to come to you (and have been prevented so far) so that I may obtain some fruit among you also, even as among the rest of the Gentiles. <sup>14</sup> I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. <sup>15</sup> So, for my part, I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.

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- 1:13 **Brethren.** “My dear brothers and sisters in Rome.” Paul refers to the Roman believers as his family in Christ. In this letter, Paul uses the word “brethren” to refer both to his Christian brothers and sisters (e.g., Rom. 8:12), and his fellow Jews in general (e.g., Rom. 9:3).

**Often I have planned.** Paul had long wanted to visit the believers in Rome. He had not yet done so—he was prevented from coming—because he was busy preaching the gospel to people who had never heard the name of Jesus (see Rom. 15:22–23).

**Obtain some fruit.** Paul wanted to reap a harvest of righteousness in Rome. He wanted to go to the most corrupt city on earth and win Romans for the Lord.

- 1:14 **I am under obligation.** Paul felt he had to share the good news as widely as possible. God did not obligate him to do this, for grace comes with no price tags. It was the love of Christ that compelled him to tell everyone the good news, whether they were civilized Greeks or illiterate barbarians, intellectual giants or provincial bumpkins.

**Greeks.** The Greek-speaking people of the Hellenized world.

**Barbarians** were uncivilized foreigners who didn't speak Greek.

**The wise.** The cultured and the educated, whether they were Greek-speaking or otherwise.

**The foolish.** The illiterate and the ignorant.

Three adjectives are translated as "foolish" in Romans. There is *aphrōn*, which means "thoughtless" in the context of someone who makes poor judgments (Rom. 2:20); there is *asynetos* which means "uncomprehending" or "an inability to understand" (Rom. 1:21); and there is *anoētos*, the word used here and in Galatians 3:1 ("You foolish Galatians!"), which means "unintelligent," "senseless," or "slow to understand."

- 1:15 **I am eager.** Paul had two reasons for wanting to visit the Roman church. He was excited by the good report he received from Aquila and Priscilla (see entry for Rom. 1:8), and he hoped to use Rome as a launch pad for a trip to the western Mediterranean (Rom. 15:24).

**Preach the gospel.** The original verb *euangelizō* means "proclaim good news or glad tidings." To preach the gospel is to announce the good news of Jesus Christ. Preaching does not involve arguing or debating, and preaching the good news should not leave others feeling anxious or condemned. To preach the gospel is to declare the good things God has done for us through his Son.



In Romans, three words that are translated as “preaching.” The word here (*euangelizō*) is closely related to the word for gospel (*euangelion*). The other words are the verb *kēryssō*, which means “to herald as a public crier” (Rom. 10:8), and the noun *kērygma*, which means “a proclamation” (Rom. 16:25).

## Romans 1:16–17

<sup>16</sup> 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. <sup>17</sup> For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, “But the righteous man shall live by faith.”

**1:16 I am not ashamed.** We have no reason to be ashamed of the gospel, for it announces something we all need: salvation and deliverance from death. In this world, you may be persecuted for your faith (John 15:20). But bet your life on Christ, and you will never be disgraced, disappointed, or put to shame (Rom. 9:33).

**The gospel.** The good news; see entry for Rom. 1:1.

**The power of God** is not an abstract concept, but the divine force that sustains all things, raises the dead, and makes us new. God’s power created the universe and everything in it. His power elevated Christ far above all other powers (Rom. 1:4, Eph. 1:20–21). When Paul proclaimed the gospel of Christ, God confirmed the message with powerful signs and wonders (Rom. 15:19). The gospel is not a manmade teaching, for it releases God’s life-giving power to all who believe (Eph. 1:19).

**The power of God for salvation.** When the gospel of Christ is received in the heart, God’s life-giving power is released. This divine power infuses the believer with new and everlasting life.

**Salvation.** The original noun *sōtēria* means “deliverance” or “rescue.” Salvation is synonymous with Jesus Christ because he alone is the author of our salvation (Acts 4:12, Heb. 5:9). “I am the door; if anyone enters through me, he will be saved” (John 10:9). Jesus Christ is the Deliverer or Savior who rescues us from the sentence of death (John 11:26, Rom. 6:8–9).

**Everyone who believes.** All God’s blessings, including forgiveness, salvation, righteousness and sanctification, come to us freely by grace and are received by faith.

The apostles did not believe that the whole world was saved. Like Jesus, they encouraged people to repent, believe the good news, and be saved (Mark 1:15, Acts 17:30, 1 Tim. 2:4).

**Believes.** To believe is to be persuaded or convinced that God raised Jesus Christ from the dead; see entry for Rom. 4:5.

**The Jew first.** Through the promises God made to Abraham, the Jews had the inside track for salvation. As Jesus told the woman at the well, “salvation is from the Jews” (John 4:22).

**Also to the Greek.** Everybody else. The promises given to Abraham and his descendants are available to all (Gal. 3:8).

1:17 **The righteousness of God** refers to his faithfulness in keeping his promises to make things right.

The revealing of God’s righteousness does not refer to his righteous character, which was known long before the gospel was proclaimed, but instead to the *unveiling* or *demonstration* of his righteousness to creation. Because God is faithful and just, he has a plan to put everything right, undo sin’s harm, and restore what was lost.

The righteousness of God is revealed in the cross (Rom. 3:25–26). By presenting Christ as a sacrifice for sins, God provides for the salvation of sinners and the justification of the ungodly (Rom. 4:5). When Paul refers to the riches of God’s wisdom and his unsearchable judgments (Rom. 11:33), he is saying the righteousness of God is unlike

anything we could have come up with. It defies human comprehension. We are better acquainted with the law of sin and death. This law says, “Do good and live,” only to condemn us when we fail. (And we all fail.) But God introduces a higher law—the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:2). This law says, “Trust Jesus and live” (Rom. 5:21, 10:9).

Those who put their faith in the Risen Lord are transferred out of Adam’s family and are adopted into the family of God (Rom. 8:15). They become new creatures, “slaves of righteousness,” who are freed from sin (Rom. 6:18). No longer subject to sin and death, God’s children eagerly await the redemption of their bodies and the restoration of creation (Rom. 8:19–23).

**It is written.** The Jews placed great significance on the written words of the law, the psalms, and the prophets (e.g., Jos. 1:8, 8:31). This reliance on the written word was carried over into the New Testament by the Gospel writers (e.g., Matt. 2:5, Mark 1:2, Luke 3:4, John 6:31), Peter (e.g., Acts 1:20, 1 Pet. 1:16), Stephen (Acts 7:42), James (e.g., Acts 15:15, Jas. 2:8), and Jesus himself (Matt. 4:4, 7, 10). However, no one quoted the Old Testament scriptures more than Paul (e.g., Acts 13:33, 23:5). In Romans alone, Paul quotes the Old Testament more than 60 times. For this reason, Romans has been called the most Old Testament book in the New Testament (see Appendix).

**From faith to faith.** It is only by faith in God’s faithfulness that we can be made right with God. (The Greek words for “faith” and “faithfulness” are the same.)

**The righteous man** is the one who trusts in the righteousness of God (see Rom. 10:3). He is no longer trying to save himself or make himself a better man. Instead, he has called upon the name of the Lord (Rom. 10:13) and has received by faith the righteousness that comes from God (Rom. 5:17). The “righteous man” quote comes from Habakkuk 2:4. (It also appears in Hebrews 10:38.)

**Live by faith.** To live by faith is to live in total dependence on the Lord. It's trusting in his grace rather than your works (Rom. 11:6). It is saying, "It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me" (Gal. 2:20).

We were made to live by faith. God did not design us to walk by flesh and lean on our own understanding (Rom. 8:5). Instead, he created us to look to him as our true Source of life, love, peace, and purpose (Rom. 8:6).

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### Romans 1:18–19

<sup>18</sup> For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, <sup>19</sup> because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them.

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1:18 **The wrath of God** means God is not indifferent to human suffering, but he is angry at the hurt inflicted on humanity and the damage done to creation. He hates death, disease, war, trafficking, child abuse, rape, domestic violence, the extinction of species, environmental destruction, and corruption, and he will not let these evils go on forever. Humanity has been laid waste by the disease of sin. The cure for sin is the blood of Jesus (1 John 1:7), but undoing the accumulated damage of sin requires the cleansing wrath of God. Since God is for us (see Rom. 8:31), his wrath is also for us. His wrath will bring an end to evil and ungodliness, and everything that harms us. God's wrath must be interpreted in the context of his love. God's love shouts "Yes!" to the human race, while his wrath declares an emphatic "No!" to anything that hinders us from experiencing his love.

**Revealed from heaven.** God reveals his wrath from heaven in two ways: First, his wrath abides on those who walk in unbelief and ungodliness (John 3:36). This wrath manifests as fear, insecurity, and the dread of a life lived apart from

God. Second, God stores up wrath for the “day of wrath” (Rom. 2:5) when he will remove everything that does not belong in his kingdom (Zeph. 1:15, 2 Pet. 3:7).

The wrath of God is not a divine foot from heaven stomping on sinners. God loves sinners; he doesn’t smite them (see Rom. 5:8). As Paul explains in the following verses, the wrath of God describes the self-inflicted erosion of our humanity that occurs when we reject God and live contrary to his ways.

**Ungodliness** is rebellion against God. The original noun *asebeia* means “anti-God” and is the antonym for a word that means “revere” or “adore.” To be ungodly is to refuse to honor God as God (verse 21) or worship something other than God (verse 23). It’s preferring the counterfeit to the authentic and glorifying the creature above the Creator.

Ungodliness says, “I don’t need God or his gifts. I don’t need his love or acceptance, and I certainly don’t need salvation. All I need I shall provide for myself.” An ungodly attitude invariably leads to unrighteous behavior.

**Unrighteousness** is the fruit of an ungodly or anti-God mindset. It is the corrupted and lonely life of the flesh as opposed to the life lived in fellowship with the Spirit. Some examples of unrighteous behavior, which Paul lists below, include greed, envy, strife, deceit, and malice (see Rom. 1:29).

**Men who suppress the truth.** Humanity lives in wilful denial. Given the evidence of creation and the witness of our consciences, no one can claim to be ignorant of God’s existence (verse 19), his attributes (verse 20), and his authority (verse 21).

**Truth** is not an invented construct subject to revision and debate. When Paul says, “Truth is in Jesus” (Eph. 4:21), he means that Jesus is the measure of all things and by him all things are known (1 Cor. 8:6, Col. 1:16). Jesus did not come to lay down the law or preach a new morality. He came to reveal the truth (John 14:6) and lead us back to the God who is true (1 John 5:20).

1:19 **That which is known about God.** We instinctively know that God is real.

**Evident within them... evident to them.** The evidence of God is both internal and external. The internal evidence is an innate knowledge written in our members as well as needs and desires that are meant to lead us to the Source of life. The external evidence includes the wonders of creation (see next verse).

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### Romans 1:20

<sup>20</sup> For since the creation of the world his invisible attributes, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.

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1:20 **Creation.** The universe bears the “fingerprints” of an unseen Creator. “The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they reveal knowledge” (see Ps. 19:1–2). The Creator invites us to consider his creation and ask, “Who created the heavens? Who spread out the earth and its offspring? Who gives breath to the people on it?” (see Isa. 42:5).

God created language and the laws of nature. He hung the stars in the sky, buried diamonds in the dirt, and hid forests inside acorns. He established the water cycle and set the tides in motion. He made the magnetic fields that protect us and designed photosynthesis so we could eat. He created electricity and mapped out the paths for animal migration. He provided the raw materials to build cities, computer chips, and spaceships, and he gave us the intelligence to put the pieces together. He authored beauty and instilled in us the creative spark for writing symphonies, sonnets, and screenplays. He made the earth our home and filled it with tribes

and nations. He did all this so that we might seek him and find him, although he is not far from any of us (see Acts 17:24–27).

**World.** The original noun *kosmos* can refer to the created world (e.g., Rom. 1:8, 5:12) or the fallen and self-serving society that remains under the influence of the devil and the powers of darkness (e.g., Rom. 3:6, 19, 11:15, 12:2).

**His invisible attributes.** God's love, power, and wisdom are on display throughout creation. We love because God is love, and he created us to love and be loved. We live because God created life and sustains all things by his word. We crave beauty because God and his work are beautiful, and he gave us the desire for beautiful things. We seek and explore because God filled the universe with wonders, and he made us curious. We are who we are because God is who he is and we are made in his image.

## END OF SAMPLE

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