

START, 2/21

Romans 1:8-15

I should have made this point at the beginning.

When and how did the Church at Rome start? “The average Bible-believing Christian in the United States knows very little about post-New Testament Judaism. He may be vaguely aware that American Judaism is divided into three theological wings: Reform (liberal), Conservative, and Orthodox. He may also be aware that European Judaism has two great ethnic branches: the Sephardim (those whose ancestors once lived in Spain, Portugal, or the Eastern Mediterranean) and the Ashkenazic Jews (those who came west from Russia and Poland), who were the Yiddish-speaking Jews in the late 1800's and early 1900's, prior to their linguistic assimilation into American culture. But as to how these Jewish groups overlap, or which group dominates Judaism either in the U. S. or in the state of Israel today, the average Christian has no idea. Few Christians have heard that there is a third branch, Oriental or Yemenite Judaism (North African), members of which have long complained that they are discriminated against politically in the state of Israel.”¹

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Paul is writing this letter about AD 57

The day of Pentecost took place in Jerusalem 50 days after the resurrection in AD 33.

Acts 2:1 And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. 2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. 3 And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. 5 And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. 6 Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language. 7 And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilaeans? 8 And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born? 9 Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in

¹ Tools of Dominion, pdf pp. 1008, 1009

² Tools of Dominion, pdf pp. 1008, 1009j

Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, 10 Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, 11 Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God. 12 And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this? 13 Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine.

2:37 Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? 38 Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

39 For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. 40 And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation. 41 Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.

Acts 2:10 *Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, **Jews and proselytes**, 11 Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God.*

Proselytes-Gentiles who were interested enough in the God of Abraham that they united with the Jews who worshiped the Christian God.

Men from the city of Rome were present. They took the gospel message preached by Peter back to Rome which gave a foundation for the church there. Paul was anxious to get to Rome so he could explain more fully the gospel that was presented in Jerusalem about 25 years previously. He was hindered, so he writes this letter which would have to suffice until he could have personal contact.

Vv. 8-15 continues his introduction to his letter. He expresses his concern for them, and his desire to come to Rome in order to strengthen them in the faith.

V. 8 ¶ *First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.*

Paul will cover many things in this letter, but he says, "Before I start, let me say this..." He does the same thing in almost all of his letters.

Thanks...

1) What does Paul give thanks for?

A very few passages

Romans 16:3 *Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus: 4 Who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles.*

1) Why did Paul thank God in vv. 3, 4

Living in Rome, they risked their lives for Paul. We should thank God for those who risk their lives for the gospel.

I think it is important here to note the importance of prayer for those who are rising their lives for the Gospel of Christ.

2) What did he say about all the churches?

They were also praying for the saints in the city of Rome.

3) Commands to give thanks for,

2 Thessalonians 2:13 *But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning **chosen you** to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: 14 Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the **obtaining of the glory** of our Lord Jesus Christ. 15 Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle.*

Traditions here would be those things taught that were according to what Paul taught.

Thank God for choosing, calling and obtaining others whom we know in gospel churches.

4) give thanks for in 2 Corinthians 9:15 *Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.*

Even Christians fail to thank God

We now live in a world full of unthankful people. We even allow ourselves to become influenced by this thankless attitude and forget that God knows of our unthankfulness. We will cover more of this in v. 21.

I read of a man who fractured his spine during a fall and ended up in a wheelchair. At first he cursed God for it, but after he was saved he said, "When I stand before God's throne, I will thank Him for breaking my back. If God would have let me live the way I was living, I would have gone to hell." Though we might not in this life feel thankful for our difficulties, but in that day we will see why.

We all can look back on events that we certainly were not thankful for then, but we are now.

The boy terribly burned at a toll both

Paul was going to say some difficult things to this church, so he starts on a positive note: *I thank God...* We should always be able to find something in others for which to be thankful.

5) How must all prayers be made?

1 Timothy 2:5 *For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Through Jesus Christ...*

All prayers and actions are an abomination to God unless they are made acceptable through Jesus Christ.

Christian sounding public prayers are an abomination to God when they are not made through Jesus Christ, who is the only mediation between God and man. Apart from Jesus Christ, man is seeking to approach God on his own merit.

There is a difference between public and private prayers.

Matthew 6:6 *But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.*

More times than I can remember, I have been in preacher's meetings where a pastor was asked to bless the food. Some of those blessings lasted for several minutes as that pastor preached with the excuse of blessing the food.

Romans 1:8. *For you all...* We are to express our love to our friends by praying and praising God for them.

Paul had not met them, but their works were well known. Sin and compromise had been kept out of this church, quite unlike most of the other churches Paul wrote to. Evidently, this was a strong church, for he certainly does not give them milk in this letter, but strong meat.

We should note that over the years, persecution has strengthened the church. The new church was strong until Emperor Constantine in about 312 exalted the Christian religion. Up until then, the persecution kept out the false believers and teachers. After his *edict of toleration*, they all came in so they could be on the good side of the Emperor.

The church at Rome was unlike the church at Corinth.

His desire was that they would understand more of the faith they were already acting on.

Faith spoken of...

6) What was it about their faith that was spoken of?

Was it faith healing? speaking in tongues? Wealth? glorious and big-name pastor? Beautiful buildings? the education of the pastor?

Their fame spread world-wide for their **V. 5, obedience to the faith**. Standing in persecution, standing in godliness in the face of the overwhelming corruption and persecution in Rome under Emperor Nero.

Wherever Paul went, he heard praise for the Christians at Rome. He tells of their reputation in order to encourage them, and to remind them of their responsibility to remain faithful: “The world is watching as you stand for Christ in the most wicked environment of Rome.”

The world is watching us. Are we faithful to the name we bear, Christian?

Rome was the capital of the Empire that controlled the world of its day. It was a city known world-over for its unbridled wickedness, and for the vile rule by Nero. Yet these Christians were known in the Christian community world-wide for their faithfulness to the total Gospel of Christ according to what they knew from the Old Testament law and the prophets. (There was no New Testament in their time.)

Nero was in Rome, and persecution reigned. If they had not been persecuted, they would not have been famous for their faithfulness. They were known for their faithfulness in in whatever circumstance they found themselves.

V. 9, For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers;

1) Why does Paul call God as his witness?

Psalms 44:21 *Shall not God search this out? for he knoweth the secrets of the heart.*

Acts 15:8 *And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us;*

Paul is writing to Christians who were converted through the Old Testament law and prophets. They knew and they lived by the law and the prophets. Nothing was more binding in the OT period than calling upon God as a witness. They knew Paul was speaking from the seriousness of his heart.

There is no fear of God today, so the term, **God as my witness**, means nothing today.

Though the faithfulness of the Christians was famous throughout the world, Paul knew they still needed further instruction in the faith, and they needed prayer. Having never met them, he refers to God as his witness to show these Christians his love, his interest in, and his commitment to their well-being in the faith.

Notice he prays not only for family and friends, but for those he had never met. The greatest kindness one can do for a friend is pray for him through Christ Jesus. Often that is the only kindness we can do for friends.

Paul shows us that we ought to “pray without ceasing.”

2) What are Paul’s eight commands found in

1 Thessalonians 5:16 *Rejoice evermore. 17 Pray without ceasing. 18 In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. 19 Quench not the Spirit. 20 Despise not prophesyings. 21 Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. 22 Abstain from all appearance of evil.*

3) V. 17, how do we pray without ceasing?

Does it mean that we must pray 24 hours a day?

It means that in everything we do, we are to ask for God’s wisdom and strength.

4) What are the several things we should pray ourselves and for others in

Eph 1:14 *Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory. 15 Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, 16 Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; 17 That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of **wisdom** and **revelation** in the **knowledge** of him: 18 The eyes of your understanding being **enlightened**; that ye may know what is the **hope** of his calling, and what the **riches of the glory** of his inheritance in the saints, 19 And what is the **exceeding greatness** of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power,*

We become connected with those for whom we pray.

5. God is my witness... Can we call God to witness the sincerity of our prayers as well as to our actions?

V. 10. Making request, if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you.

He had heard of their faith; that is, he had heard of their obedience to the gospel, even in the midst of the persecution. That obedience was not simply saying that they believed something, but they acted out their faith. Faith without works is dead, and he had heard of their works.

1) His requests?

He had been praying that he would have a **pleasant and successful** journey to go see them. He had a successful journey but it was by no means pleasant.

2) He said, *if by any means...* He did get to go see them until he went to Rome as a prisoner. The Jews were intent on killing Paul in Jerusalem, so he appealed to Caesar. He went to Rome as a prisoner.

In Acts chapter 21:21, Paul is accused of teaching converts to forsake Moses, and of polluting the Temple at Jerusalem. A riot against Paul followed, and in order to keep Paul from being killed, the chief captain of the Roman garrison in Jerusalem rescued him. Paul asked the captain to let him speak to the mob, which he did. In chapter 22, Paul gives his testimony about how he persecuted believers, even delivering them unto death. When he told the mob of how God delivered him from Judaism, and sent him to preach the gospel of Christ to the Gentiles, the mob then cried out for his death. The chief captain started to scourge him to find out the truth. When Paul revealed that he was a Roman citizen, the chief captain did not scourge him.

Chapters 22-25 describes the circumstances that caused Paul to appeal to Caesar in 25:4. That appeal sent him to Rome, and chapters 27 to 28:16 describe the many events that took place on his way to Rome. **Acts 28:16** tells us that Paul was able to dwell in a house with a soldier. **Acts 28:30** *And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him, 31 Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him.*

3) What is a prayer we all should pray.

By the will of God. He prayed as we all should pray. His request was conditioned on the will of God. He went, but not in the pleasant manner he expected.

James 4:11 *Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge. 12 **There is one lawgiver**, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another? 13 Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: 14 Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. 15 **For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that.***

4) What did the Lord say in Proverbs 16:33 *The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the LORD.*

Though we make great plans and preparations, it is the Lord who brings his will to pass. God's answers come in his manner and in his time.