

The Pilgrimage To A Spirit-Led Life

Part Two – Romans 1:1-21

Romans 1:6 [NIV] *“And you also are among those who are called to belong to Jesus Christ.”* The word *“called”* kletos could be translated *“invited”*.

It is related to the word for church in the Greek *“Ekklesia”* – a company of people called out.

v7 to all *“beloved of God”* an essential thing to remember always; God loves the people He calls.

Loved us *“before the foundation of the world”*

John 17:23-24 [NIV] *“I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. “Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world.”*

But it is only when we respond to the call that we enter into the experience of that love.

God’s call is the out-working of His Love

Romans 1:7 [NIV] *“To all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.”*

“called to be saints” *“to be”* is in italics indicating it is **not** in original.

I feel it is best to leave *“to be”* out in this case because God calls us Saints, and **when God calls us something then that is what we are.**

We may not feel like a saint, people may not see us that way, but what God calls us is what we are going to be.

When we are called by God Holy Ones we are going to end up Holy Ones.

So we might as well start quickly to co-operate with God to become Holy Ones.

God means business!

Paul uses the words Jesus, Christ or Lord on over 30 occasions in Romans.

This is why this is so powerful a letter, it centres on the central figure of Gospel, Christ (the Messiah).

Whenever we get off the central theme of the gospel, Jesus Christ, we lose the power of God and have to resort to human energy, and human methods.

When our central desire is on uplifting and magnifying Jesus, the Holy Spirit gives us all the power we need.

Note: *“grace”* comes before *“peace”*

Romans 1:8 [NIV] *“First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is being reported all over the world.”*

Most times Paul in wisdom and love combined thanks the people for their faith in Jesus Christ.

A very important principle

If we cannot thank God for someone, don't pray for them until we can find in them something to thank God for.

It is a known fact that you will always get more out of people by praising them than by criticising them.

There is one notable exception to this introduction to Paul's letters.

It is the one written to the Galatians.

After the normal greeting he goes straight to their problem.

Galatians 1:6 *"I marvel that you are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel."*

The Corinthian church was in confusion (following different men).

In the Corinthian church there was adultery, drunkenness at the Lord's table, **yet** Paul thanked God for them but **not the Galatian church.**

Why?

Because of the problem they had, *"legalism"*.

That is the one thing that really upset Paul.

He knew everything else could be dealt with but legalism, that kind of *"set him back"*.

"faith is spoken of throughout the whole world".

Rome was the centre of the then civilised world and what happened in Rome affected the whole world.

Paul in his wisdom centred his work of evangelism always in the main towns, never in the little villages or hamlets.

He knew that what happened in the cities would then naturally filter eventually to all villages around.

Why was it the Christians in Rome that they were spoken of world wide?

I feel it was their personal example.

John 13:34-35 [NIV] *"love one another . . . by this shall **all men** know you are my disciples."*

The example of a group of people from many different backgrounds all loving one another and living in harmony, as the result of their allegiance to Christ.

Romans 1:9 [NIV] *"God, whom I serve with my whole heart in preaching the gospel of his Son, is my witness how constantly I remember you"*

Although Paul did not know the people at Rome personally, he nevertheless constantly prayed to God for them.

Even if we are separated from people, and even if there is no other gift which we can give them, we can surround them with the strength and defence of our prayers.

Romans 1:10 [NIV] *“in my prayers at all times; and I pray that now at last by God’s will the way may be opened (Greek word “euodoo” meaning helped to reach a goal) for me to come to you.”*

Paul prayed for a “*prosperous*” journey.

Was this prayer answered?

I believe so.

What kind of journey did he have?

Acts tells of storms, shipwreck, hunger, thirst, hostility, bitten by snake, etc., etc.

We always tend to relate prospering to material or financial wealth or personal comfort.

To prosper in Paul’s eyes (and I believe any Christian’s eyes) is the original use of the word prosper (same in Greek or English).

Greek “*euodoo*” (you-od-o-o) composition of two words meaning “*to help*” and “*along the road*” – or “*success in reaching a goal*”.

When we are helped by God along the road to the goal **He** has for us we prosper.

We **are** helped along the road of life **when** we are seeking God’s will for us in life, as mentioned in this verse.

Romans 1:11-14 [NIV] *“I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong, that is, that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other’s faith. I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that I planned many times to come to you (but have been prevented from doing so until now) in order that I might have a harvest among you, just as I have had among the other Gentiles. I am bound both to Greeks and Non-greeks, both to the wise and the foolish.”*

Paul, in his humility, was always ready to receive as well as to give.

There are two kinds of teachers.

(1) There are teachers whose attitude is that they are standing above their scholars and they are telling them what they should and must accept.

(2) There are the teachers who in effect say, “*come now, let’s learn about this together*”.

Paul was the greatest thinker and most highly educated man God used in the early church yet he was humble enough to know he could receive as well as give to others.

It takes humility to teach as it takes humility to learn, only God is infallible.

The introductions are now over and Paul sounds out aloud the gospel trumpet.

Romans 1:15-16 [NIV] *“That is why I am so eager to preach the gospel also to you who are at Rome. I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.”*

If we are ashamed of the gospel it is because we have lost sight of the fact that it is the power of God.

Not a power for destruction but for salvation of those who **believe** (key word).

Given historically first to Jewish people through their scriptures then to the Gentile world.

For Paul to be proud of the gospel which he preached is quite amazing considering the background.

Paul was imprisoned in Philippi, chased out of Thessalonica, smuggled out of Beroea, laughed out of Athens, told his message was foolishness to Greeks and stumbling block to Jews.

Yet there is something in the gospel that can cause us, like Paul, to triumph over all that men can do to us.

What is this something?

Romans 1:17 [NIV] *“For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: “The righteous will live by faith.”*

In the gospel message are the three foundational pillars of Christianity.

1. Salvation 2. Faith 3. Righteousness.

Paul quotes from Old Testament prophet to emphasise that this was **not** just his idea but revealed by God through His prophets long before.

Habakkuk 2:4 [NIV] *“See, he is puffed up; his desires are not upright, but the righteous will live by his faith.”*

It is through the gospel message that God reveals the way that man can become righteous before God – it brings a righteousness that God **can** accept.

(**Not** our own righteousness which is but *“filthy rags”* in God’s sight **Isaiah 64:6**)

It is only on the basis of righteousness that we can receive any of God’s other blessings.

In Romans chapter five we will see that Paul speaks about the *“free gift of righteousness”* (**Romans 5:17**).

Then in chapter six Paul speaks about the *“gift of eternal life”* (**Romans 6:23**).

This order cannot be reversed.

God will not give eternal life to anyone who is not righteous in His sight.

A Loving Righteous God could **not** bestow His gift of eternal life on an unrighteous person.

To give eternal life to an unrighteous (evil) person would **not** be expressing love to that person!

The first problem was to resolve the issue of righteousness.

How can we be righteous before God?

Believe, have faith in the gospel message!

When we use the word faith we must **not** be under the misunderstanding that pervades much of the Christian community.

Both in Hebrew and Greek the word used for “*faith*” primarily describes **character** and then what we believe.

So to reduce the gospel to a theological proposition is to rob it of truth.

The word means initially **faithfulness**, (commitment).

The gospel is only a power to those who have made a commitment to God through Jesus Christ.

Remove the commitment and you are left with a theological faith that does **not** produce any results.

Paul then in the second half of this chapter examines the “*other side of the coin*”.

Paul has talked about the revelation of God’s Righteousness; now he is going to talk about the revelation of God’s Wrath.

Both are contained in the gospel.

Acts 2:14-37 [NIV] *“Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: ‘Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. These men are not drunk, as you suppose. It’s only nine in the morning! No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: ‘In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. I will show wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke. The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’ ‘Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. This man was handed over to you by God’s set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him. David said about him: ‘I saw the Lord always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will live in hope, because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay. You have made known to me the paths of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence.’ ‘Brothers, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day. But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne. Seeing what was ahead, he spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to the grave, nor did his body see decay. God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact. Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear. For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said, ‘The Lord said to my Lord: ‘Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.’ ‘Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.’ When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, ‘Brothers, what shall we do?’”*

But see the end result, the power of the gospel.

Acts 2:41-47 [NIV] *“Those who accepted his message were baptised, and about three thousand were added to their number that day. They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.”*

Thousands of changed lives.

When we look at Christ on the cross we need to understand that Christ endured the wrath of God for us.

Romans 5:9 [NIV] *“Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God’s wrath through him!”*

1 Thessalonians 1:10 [NIV] *“and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath.”*

1 Thessalonians 5:9-10 [NIV] *“For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him.”*

How?

Christ became the sin offering.

He took our sin on His body.

1 Peter 2:24 [NIV] *“He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.”*

Christ became sin for us and received the total wrath of God poured out on Him on the cross.

There is **no** way God will ever condone sin, it has to be repented of and paid for by the death of Christ in our stead.

God will deal with sin, forgive sin, but never tolerate sin.

Now let us consider at the description of God’s wrath against the **whole** human race.

Very important to understand this part of scripture because many people think *‘how could a loving God punish harmless innocent people?’*

That is **not** God’s problem for there **are not** any harmless innocent people !

God’s problem is *‘how can He forgive wicked sinners?’*

That is the problem that is resolved in Romans.

In this second half of the first chapter of Romans God, through Paul, makes the sin and accountability of the whole human race abundantly clear.

Romans 1:18 [NIV] *“The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness,”*

God had made the truth of God (gospel) available to all men but we have suppressed it because it doesn’t suit us to face up to the truth of what we are.

Romans 1:19-20 [NIV] *“since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.”*

Through His Creation God has made the truth about Himself available to all men.

Romans 1:19-20 [Amplified Bible] *“For that which is known about God is evident to them and made plain in their inner consciousness, because God [Himself] has shown it to them. For ever since the creation of the world His invisible nature and attributes, that is, His eternal power and divinity have been made intelligible and clearly discernible in and through the things that have been made, His handiwork. So [men] are without excuse, altogether without any defence or justification.”*

Psalms 19:1-4 [NIV] *“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 display knowledge. There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard. Their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world. In the heavens he has pitched a tent for the sun.”*

Two particular aspects of truth.

(a) His Eternal Power

(b) His Divine Nature (“*God Head*” in King James).

How does this revelation come?

Evident within them and evident to them combination of two things - internal and external (a)

External:- order within the universe, with all its interdependency, harmony, design and beauty.

(b) **Internal**:- this is what is unique about humans compared with all other creatures on earth.

There is in humans a logical, mathematical faculty that can appreciate all the beauty, harmony, design and order of the vast universe.

Job 32:8 [NIV] *“But it is the spirit in a man, the breath of the Almighty, that gives him understanding.”*

No other creature on earth can do this.

This is what makes us **all** accountable to God.

People who do not believe in God talk about the “*laws of nature*”.

This is a contradiction of terms, for in our human experience we do **not** know of any law that was **not** made by a law maker.

A proper logical scientific process of explanation is to proceed from the known to the unknown.

But when we talk of a law that is **not** made by anyone we are proceeding from the unknown. This is an invalid process of explanation.

There are millions of people today who deny this revelation; Paul is very blunt about what God thinks of them.

Romans 1:22 [NIV] *“Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools.”*

He calls them fools.

We hear a lot about evolution but there is another side, it is called devolution. [A decent through a series of changes.]

A lot of things are **not** evolving, **they are de-volving**, getting far worse morally and physically.

Romans 1:21 [NIV] *“For although they knew God, they **neither** glorified him as God **nor** gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.”*

Here we have the first two downward steps of humanity.

Not things they did but things not done.

We can be just as guilty for the things we **don't** do as for the things we do.

(a) Did **not** glorify God

(b) Did **not** give God thanks

The moment we stop glorifying God or giving Him thanks we start on a slippery downward path away from God.

Paul describes this path in the next few verses which we will study next time.

We need to pause at this point to ask ourselves this question: *‘Do I constantly glorify God in all I think and do and am I constantly thanking God for all His many blessings?’*

If **not**, beware, for the path we tread is a slippery and deadly one.