

Romans Part 1 (1:1-15)

--PART 1 KEYWORDS: BONDSERVANT, PRAYER, PROVIDENCE

--1:1-6: "Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated to the gospel of God..."

- the term "bondservant" signifies the apostle Paul's total commitment to serving Jesus Christ in which he put God's will before his own
- Paul had grown to the point where he could say, "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me..." (Galatians 2:20) and "For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain." (Philippians 1:21)

--1:7-15: the historical context of the book of Romans (Paul's letter to the Christian church in Rome) not only gives us a fascinating insight into the growth of the early church but it also illustrates the depth of Paul's commitment to follow Christ as a bondservant...

--Paul wrote the book of Romans around 56 AD; he was approximately 60 years old, had been a Christian for approximately 23 years, and was near the end of his 3rd missionary journey...

- during 10 years prior to his 3 missionary journeys he preached in Syria and Cilicia (Acts 9:30, Galatians 1:21); Paul was born in Tarsus, the capital of Cilicia
- first missionary journey: traveled through Galatia and established many churches to whom he later wrote Galatians (Acts 13-14)
- second: started from Jerusalem, passed through Galatia, and expanded his ministry into Macedonia and Achaia, present day Greece. (Acts 15:39-18:22)
- third: started again from Jerusalem, passed through Galatia, settled in Ephesus for two years, then travelled too Macedonia and Achaia for a three month stay during which he wrote his epistle to the church of Rome 1000 miles north-west where he had never been. Acts (18:23-21:16)

--the church in Rome...

- in 56 AD, Rome was the largest city in the world (1-4 million people)
- emperor Nero had just risen to power and would later carry out fierce persecution of the church
- it's possible that "the visitors from Rome" (Acts 2:10) who were present at Pentecost returned to Rome and founded the church there; and through the years many Christians who were converts of Peter and Paul's itinerant ministry migrated to Rome
- the church in Rome in 56 AD was strong... "I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world." (Romans 1:8)
- unlike many of his other letters where he corrected problems in other churches, through the book of Romans Paul entrusted the church in Rome with his most comprehensive explanation of the gospel, a masterpiece that has been called "The Constitution of Christianity"** (if Paul were alive today the letter he would send to Rome (the capitol of the Roman Catholic Church) would be very different!)

--by the end of his third missionary journey Paul was planning on expanding his ministry to Spain and looked forward to visiting the church of Rome on his way there. However, he first had to return to Jerusalem, "bound in the Spirit..." (Acts 20:22) for the work God had for him to complete there; and in this chapter of his ministry we see a dramatic illustration of how he was a "bondservant of Jesus Christ", putting God's will above his own... Acts 19:21-28:31 covers this chapter of Paul's ministry:

--Acts 19:21: "When these things were accomplished [*completed 2 years of ministry in Ephesus*], Paul purposed in the Spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, "After I have been there, I must also see Rome."

--Acts 20:2: "...he [*Paul*] came to Greece [*the region of Achaia*] and stayed three months." *during which time he ministered in Corinth*

--while ministering to the church in Corinth (in Achaia) Paul wrote his epistle to the Romans...

--Romans 15:19-26: "...from Jerusalem to Illyricum [*in the far west of Macedonia*] I have fully preached the gospel of Christ. And so I have made it my aim to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build on another man's foundation... 22 For this reason **I also have been much hindered from coming to you**. 23 But now no longer having a place in these parts, and having a **great desire these many years to come to you, 24 whenever I journey to Spain**, I shall come to you. For I hope to see you on my journey, and to be helped on my way there by you, if first I may enjoy your company for a while. 25 **But now I am going to Jerusalem to minister to the saints**. 26 For it pleased those from Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints who are in Jerusalem."

--earlier that year Paul wrote to the Corinthians from Ephesus: "Now concerning the **collection for the saints** [*in Jerusalem where the church was poor*], as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also: 2 On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come. 3 And when I come, whomever you approve by your letters I will send to bear **your gift to Jerusalem**. 4 **But if it is fitting that I go also** [*by the time Paul was writing Romans in Corinth he was compelled to go to Jerusalem*], they will go with me. 5 Now I will come to you when I pass through Macedonia (for I am passing through Macedonia). 6 And it may be that I will remain, or even spend the winter with you [*Paul wrote Romans while spending three months in the winter in Corinth*], that you may send me on my journey, wherever I go. 7 For I do not wish to see you now on the way; but I hope to stay a while with you, **if the Lord permits**. 8 But I will tarry in Ephesus until Pentecost. 9 For a great and effective door has opened to me, and there are many adversaries." (1 Corinthians 16:1-8)

--Paul asked the Roman church to pray for him... Romans 15:30-33: "Now I beg you, brethren, through the Lord Jesus Christ, and through the love of the Spirit, that you **strive together with me in prayers to God for me**, 31 that I may be **delivered from those in Judea** [*in particular, Jerusalem*] who do not believe, **and that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints** [*in the past there were tensions about the law of Moses becoming obsolete, as the apostle Paul taught*], 32 **that I may come to you with joy by the will of God**, and may be refreshed together with you."

--Paul also prayed for the church in Rome... Romans 1:9-13: "...**without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers**, 10 making request **if, by some means, now at last I may find a way in the will of God to come to you**. 11 For I long to see you... 13 Now I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that **I often planned to come to you (but was hindered until now)**..." *Paul was hindered because God had work for Him elsewhere and he was also hindered by adversaries... ex: "a great and effective door has opened to me, and there are many adversaries" – 1 Cor. 16:9*

--Acts 20:22-24: on his way back to Jerusalem, Paul passed by Ephesus again and met with the elders there... **"now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem**, not knowing the things that will happen to me there, 23 except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me. 24 But none of these things move me; **nor do I count my life dear to myself**, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God. 25 And indeed, now I know that you all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, will see my face no more."

--Acts 21:7-14: Paul's journey back to Jerusalem continues... "And when we had finished our voyage from Tyre, we came to Ptolemais, greeted the brethren, and stayed with them one day. 8 On the next day we who were Paul's companions departed and came to Caesarea, and entered the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, and stayed with him. 9 Now this man had four virgin daughters who prophesied. 10 And as we stayed many days, a certain prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. 11 When he had come to us, he took Paul's belt, bound his own hands and feet, and said, "Thus says the Holy Spirit, 'So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man who owns this belt, and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.'" 12 Now when we heard these things, both **we and those from that place pleaded with him not to go up to Jerusalem**. 13 Then Paul answered, "What do you mean by weeping and breaking my heart? For **I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus**. So when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, **"The will of the Lord be done."**

--Paul arrived in Jerusalem and the first prayer request he shared in Romans was answered
--**prayer request:** "that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints" (Romans 15:31)

--**answer:** "And when we had come to Jerusalem, **the brethren received us gladly.** 18 On the following day Paul went in with us to James, and all the elders were present. 19 When he had greeted them, he told in detail those things which God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry. 20 And when they heard it, **they glorified the Lord.** And they said to him, 'You see, brother, how many myriads of Jews there are who have believed, and they are all zealous for the law...' (Acts 21:20-21) *The leaders in Jerusalem then addressed the ongoing problem of Christian Jews clinging to the law of Moses even though it had become obsolete (Paul addresses this problem in detail in Galatians)*

--Acts 21:27-30: shortly after Paul's arrival in Jerusalem, a Jewish mob, condemning Paul for teaching that the law of Moses was obsolete, drug him out of the temple and tried to kill him; then Paul's second prayer request in Romans was answered:

--**prayer request:** " that I may be delivered from those in Judea who do not believe" (Romans 15:31)

--**answer:** the Roman government arrested Paul and in prison he was protected from the mob... "Now as they were seeking to kill him, news came to the commander of the garrison that all Jerusalem was in an uproar. 32 He immediately took soldiers and centurions, and ran down to them. And when they saw the commander and the soldiers, they stopped beating Paul. 33 Then the commander came near and took him, and commanded him to be bound with two chains; and he asked who he was and what he had done. 34 And some among the multitude cried one thing and some another. So when he could not ascertain the truth because of the tumult, he commanded him to be taken into the barracks. 35 When he reached the stairs, he had to be carried by the soldiers because of the violence of the mob. 36 For the multitude of the people followed after, crying out, "Away with him!" (Acts 21:31-36) *Paul was truly taking up his cross and following Jesus, suffering in his footsteps... for an angry mob of Jews yelled to the authorities about Jesus, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!"*

--Acts 23:12-18: the effort to kill Paul intensified... "And when it was day, **some of the Jews banded together and bound themselves under an oath, saying that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul.** 13 Now there were more than forty who had formed this conspiracy. 14 They came to the chief priests and elders, and said, "We have bound ourselves under a great oath that we will eat nothing until we have killed Paul. 15 Now you, therefore, together with the council, suggest to the commander that he be brought down to you tomorrow, as though you were going to make further inquiries concerning him; but we are ready to kill him before he comes near." 16 **So when Paul's sister's son heard of their ambush, he went and entered the barracks and told Paul.** 17 Then Paul called one of the centurions to him and said, "Take this young man to the commander, for he has something to tell him. 18 So he took him and brought him to the commander and said, "Paul the prisoner called me to him and asked me to bring this young man to you. He has something to say to you." 19 Then the commander took him by the hand, went aside, and asked privately, "What is it that you have to tell me?" 20 And he said, "The Jews have agreed to ask that you bring Paul down to the council tomorrow, as though they were going to inquire more fully about him. 21 But do not yield to them, for more than forty of them lie in wait for him, men who have bound themselves by an oath that they will neither eat nor drink till they have killed him; and now they are ready, waiting for the promise from you." 22 So the commander let the young man depart, and commanded him, "Tell no one that you have revealed these things to me." *The providence of Paul's nephew being in the right place at the right time...*

--Acts 23:18-22: *the incredible level of security that resulted from Paul's imprisonment – including a 470 soldier escort to Caesarea - was a dramatic answer to prayer for deliverance from unbelieving Jews...* "And he [*the Roman commander*] called for two centurions, saying, 'Prepare two hundred soldiers, seventy horsemen, and two hundred spearmen to go to Caesarea at the third hour of the night; 24 and provide mounts to set Paul on, and bring him safely to Felix the governor.'"

--Acts 18:23-28:14: Paul spent 2 years in prison and through the legal proceedings appealed his case to Caesar, which resulted in him being transferred to the prison in Rome, the city where he had sent the book of Romans and where he had been looking forward to minister in.

--Pauls third prayer request in Romans was finally answered...

--**prayer request:** "that I may come to you with joy by the will of God" (Romans 15:32)

--**answer:** "...And so we went toward Rome. 15 And from there, when the brethren heard about us, they came to meet us as far as Appii Forum and Three Inns. When Paul saw them, he thanked God and took courage." (Acts 28:14-15)

--one may think that it was a mistake for Paul to go to Jerusalem because of the long imprisonment that resulted, but Paul puts this idea to rest in his letter to the Philippians, which he either wrote from the prison in Rome or Caesarea:

--Philippians 1:12-21: "**But I want you to know, brethren, that the things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel,** 13 so that it has become evident to the whole palace guard, and to all the rest, that my chains are in Christ; 14 and most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains, are much more bold to speak the word without fear. ... 19 **For I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,** 20 according to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death. 21 **For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.** ... *the apostle Paul exemplified what it means to be a bondservant of Christ!*

--the book of Acts ends with Paul under house arrest in Rome, and then the next verse in the Bible is Romans 1:1: "Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ..."

--Paul was released a year later and resumed his missionary travels until he was rearrested and imprisoned in Rome again and finally executed in AD 67 around 70 years of age. Most scholars have concluded that he never did visited Spain. One scholar describes what Paul's execution was probably like:

The trial ended, Paul was condemned and delivered over to the executioner. He was led out of the city with a crowd of the lowest rabble at his heels. The fatal spot was reached; he knelt beside the block; the headsman's axe gleamed in the sun and fell; and the head of the apostle of the world rolled down in the dust. So sin did its uttermost and its worst. Yet how poor and empty was its triumph! ... ten thousand times ten thousand welcomed him in the same hour at the gates of the city which is really eternal. Even on earth Paul could not die... in ten thousand churches every Sabbath and on a thousand thousand hearths every day his eloquent lips still teach that gospel of which he was never ashamed. (Jensen's New Testament Survey, pg. 238)

--next week we will continue with Romans 1:16: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes..."