

SALVATION IN ROMANS

Salvation Past, or Salvation Present and Future?

Part I

“To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

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

Now I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that oftentimes I purposed to come unto you, (but was let hitherto) that I might have some fruit among you also, even as among other Gentiles.

I am debtor both to the Greeks and to the Barbarians [*i.e.*, Gentiles with and without Greek culture]; both to the wise, and to the unwise.

So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also.

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek [*i.e.*, ‘Gentile,’ *cf.* vv. 13, 14].

For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith [Hab. 2:4]” (Rom. 1:7, 8, 13-17).

(For supplementary material, see the companion article, “God Gave Them Over...”)

Romans chapter one has to do with *two types of Christians* in relation to *the gospel* (good news) mentioned different places in vv. 1-16, and to *faith* (vv. 16, 17), associated with this good news.

The division of the chapter with respect to two types of Christians is seen at the end of verse seventeen, with verse eighteen beginning the second division.

Before this division there is a reiteration of the subject matter and the description of one type Christian (vv. 1-17).

After this division, with a view to the subject matter already laid out in the opening part of the chapter, there is a description of the other type Christian (vv. 18-32).

The Type Christians Presented in vv. 1-17

The Christians described in the opening part of the chapter are, as Paul described himself, “not ashamed of the gospel of Christ”; or, using an explanation of that being referenced in the words “gospel” and “Christ” in the verse, a person could say that Christians of this nature are “not ashamed of the good news of the One Who will rule and reign.”

There is really *nothing* about salvation by grace through faith in these first seventeen verses. The verses, among related issues, have to do with “the seed of David” (v. 3), declared to be “the Son of God with power [‘sonship’ has to do with *rulership*]” (v. 4), with “obedience to the faith” (v. 5), with the faith of Christians in Rome being “spoken of throughout the whole world” (v. 8), and with Paul’s expressed desire to go to and proclaim this good news to the Christians in Rome, for a stated purpose — “that I might have some fruit among you also, even as among other Gentiles” (vv. 10, 13; cf. vv. 15, 16).

The Type Christians Presented in vv. 18-32

Then, with verse seventeen as a closing statement for the opening part of the chapter, the other type Christians are presented. And the type Christians presented in this section, rather than exercising faith and experiencing the salvation in view in verse sixteen, do not exercise faith and, instead of experiencing this salvation, will suffer “the wrath of God.”

Exactly the opposite of that seen in the previous section is seen in this section. And that becomes increasingly evident as one continues studying this section.

First of all, note the subject matter at hand. The gospel of

grace (having to do with the unsaved and one's eternal salvation) is not the message Paul called attention to various ways in the opening seventeen verses. This has already been shown but will be shown more fully in the next section of this article (also see Part II in this article, pp. 7ff).

Then, to further illustrate that Christians alone can be in view throughout chapter one, note the words "knowledge" and "knowing" in verses twenty-eight and thirty-two.

Both of these words are translations of the Greek word *epignosis* (the verb form of this word is used in v. 32, meaning the same as the noun form in v. 28).

In the Greek text there is the regular word for knowledge (*gnosis*); and there is an intensified form of *gnosis*, formed through the preposition *epi* (meaning, "upon") being prefixed to the word (*epi-gnosis*, which has to do with a knowledge of something beyond a regular knowledge, *i.e.*, some facet of a mature knowledge concerning the matter at hand).

And, according to I Cor. 2:14, the natural man (which is all that the unsaved person possesses) can't even come into possession of a *gnosis* type knowledge (the Greek word used in this verse). The reason, of course, is because he is spiritually dead. He simply cannot understand spiritual things.

But the people in view in the latter part of Romans chapter one came into possession of not only a *gnosis* but an *epignosis* type knowledge of that in view. How did they do this if unsaved? They didn't, for they couldn't have done so.

And, aside from the preceding, it wouldn't make any sense at all to see the first seventeen verses correctly (a message [vv. 15, 16] having to do with *faith* [vv. 8, 16, 17], in relation to *fruit-bearing* [v. 13]), and then try to see the latter part of the chapter (vv. 18-32) dealing with the unsaved. Scripture is just not structured in a fashion of that nature.

(Note that not every unfaithful Christian would fit into the category of those committing the sins mentioned in vv. 18-32, though some would [an ever-increasing number in the world today].

The division between these two types of Christians is on the

basis of an exercise of *faith*. One exercises faith, the other does not.

And, there is *no middle ground in this realm*. Christians either find themselves among those described in the first part of the chapter or those described in the latter part of the chapter, regardless of whether or not they are guilty of the sins named in the chapter.

“He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad” [Matt. 12:30; cf. Luke 11:23].)

Romans 1:16

Understanding several things about the sixteenth verse of this chapter would be another *key* to understanding how Romans begins and could only continue.

This verse is invariably understood (actually, misunderstood) as referring to *eternal salvation* — how the unsaved can be saved, with an order in the proclamation of the message (seen in Eph. 2:8, 9 or Acts 16:30, 31) given to the Jew (*ref.* Part II in this article, pp. 7ff).

But note several things about the verse:

1) *How the Verse Is Introduced*

The opening fourteen verses of Romans chapter one somewhat build into verses fifteen through seventeen. Note again these three verses together:

“So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also.

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith [a quotation from Hab. 2:4, seen again in Gal. 3:11 and Heb. 10:38].”

2) *“Salvation” in this Verse*

The good news Paul desired to proclaim in verse sixteen was to be proclaimed to the Christians in Rome (v. 15), with a view to fruit-bearing (v. 13). In this respect, the message in view was

to be proclaimed to individuals who were *already eternally saved*. Thus, the message couldn't possibly have been a reference to the gospel of grace, for they had already heard and believed this message.

The salvation seen in the verse could only have to do with present and future aspects of salvation (the saving of the soul), with continued faithfulness concerning the matter at hand on the part of the Christians in Rome being the key factor.

3) "Faith" ('Believeth') in the Verse

The whole of the Christian life is *a walk by faith*. *The just are to live by faith*, as seen in the summation of the opening seventeen verses of Romans chapter one.

Then, one finds Hebrews chapter eleven — often referred to as “the great chapter on faith” — introduced in the closing verses of the preceding chapter by the same quotation from Hab. 2:4 as seen in Rom. 1:17, “the just shall live by faith” (v. 38); and this quotation is connected with *the saving of the soul in the next verse* (v. 39), *leading into chapter eleven, relating the subject matter in connection with faith in chapter eleven.*

In a respect, the whole of Hebrews chapter eleven — a section on *faith* (cf. v 6), as in Romans, which has to do with *the saving of the soul* (introduced in Hebrews after a similar fashion to that seen in Romans [10:35-39]) — would parallel the first seventeen verses of Romans chapter one. Both books deal with *exactly* the same thing, from different perspectives.

In Romans chapter one, the words “believe” (v. 16) and “faith” (v. 17) are the same word in the Greek text — one a verb, the other a noun (*pisteuo*; *pistis*). This is why salvation is seen in Scripture both through *believing* and/or through *an exercise of faith* (cf. Eph. 2:8; Acts 16:31). It just depends on how the word is used in the verse — as a verb, or as a noun.

The same thing is seen in Rom. 1:16, 17, though *pisteuo* (the verb form of the word) is used as a participle. And, if a person wants to translate the participle more in the sense of “faith” rather than “believe” — *i.e.*, “...to everyone exercising faith...” — exactly the same thing is being stated.

Translating the word in this manner would actually be more in keeping with the continuing thought in verse seventeen where *pistis*, the noun form of the word, is used.

Now, time has been spent on this word in the preceding manner in order to introduce something often overlooked, or glossed over, when dealing with the sixteenth verse. The participle, translated “believeth,” is in a form in the Greek text showing *continuous action*. That is, *a continuous act of faith, as seen in the next verse — from faith to faith* — is being dealt with by this participle.

(Using John 3:15, 16 and Rom. 1:16, note how verbal action of the preceding nature is dealt with in Greek grammar. The same participle form of *pisteuo* is used in all three verses, translated “believeth.”

In this particular participle form [a present active form] *continuous action is normally shown unless the context indicates otherwise* [unless the context indicates action at a point in time, *a one-time occurrence of the action*].

In John 3:15, 16, action at a point in time is indicated in v. 14 through a reference to Moses lifting up the serpent in the wilderness. *Look and live* is seen in the type [a one-time action], which will govern the type action seen in the antitype in the subsequent two verses.

But in Rom. 1:16 there is nothing in the context which would indicate anything other than *continuous action*. And *continuous action on the part of the one believing* [continuously exercising faith] would be perfectly in line with the whole of the context, particularly in the next verse — “from faith to faith” [v. 17].)

Romans chapter one introduces and lays out the continuing subject in the book. In this respect, the first chapter makes it very clear that *Romans was written to saved individuals in relation to the salvation of the soul, with the kingdom in view*.

This epistle is just like all other epistles in the New Testament — *all written to the saved and all dealing centrally with issues related to salvation present and future, not to salvation past* (though this message is seen different places throughout the epistles).

Part II

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek [*i.e.*, ‘the Gentile,’ *cf.* vv. 13, 14].

For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith [Hab. 2:4]” (Rom. 1:16, 17).

To properly understand that which is in view through the closing words of verse sixteen — “to the Jew first, and also to the Greek” — an individual must understand several things about the four gospels, the Book of Acts, and the Book of Romans.

He must understand *the content of the message proclaimed to Israel during the period covered by both the four gospels and Acts* (proclaimed from abt. 30 AD to abt. 62 AD), *the central message of the first chapter of Romans* (see Part I in this article, pp. 1ff), and *the time when Romans was written* (written during the Acts period).

Message to Israel in the Gospels

One central message was proclaimed to Israel throughout the gospels; and this message, contrary to popular belief, *did not pertain to salvation by grace* (*i.e.*, the message which would have been proclaimed to the unsaved then, or is to be proclaimed to the unsaved today).

The message proclaimed to Israel, introduced by John the Baptist and continued by Christ and His disciples, was *a message for Israel alone, and it was a message for a saved people. The Gentiles, or the unsaved, could have no part in this message.*

(Note that Israel was still sacrificing the paschal lambs year by year at this time, observing the Passover as set forth in Exodus chapter twelve. And, through slaying the lambs and properly applying the blood, they could only have been in *exactly the same*

position as the Israelites under Moses in Exodus chapter twelve.

Through this means, the Israelites during Christ's day would have been *just as saved* as the Israelites during Moses' day. God could only have recognized a substitutionary death at that time and, so to speak, passed over the houses *when He saw the blood*, exactly as He had done 1,500 years before during Moses' day.)

The very succinct message to Israel, begun by John the Baptist, had to do with both an exhortation and an announcement:

"Repent ye [a plural pronoun, a call for the entire Jewish nation to repent]: for the kingdom of the heavens is at hand [literal rendering from the Greek text]" (Matt. 3:2; cf. Matt 4:17; 10:2-7).

The call was for *national repentance* (a change of mind relative to past and present disobedience, going back over centuries of time, resulting in the state of the Jewish people at that time [one part under Roman rule in the land, the other part scattered among the nations]). And this was with a view to *the kingdom of the heavens being in the offering*. That is, *the Jewish nation was being offered the kingdom of the heavens, based on national repentance, followed by baptism*.

(The kingdom has two spheres — *an earthly*, and *a heavenly* [Satan and his angels have ruled from the heavenly over the earthly since time immemorial]. And Israel was made the repository in the O.T. for both spheres of the kingdom, from which man was destined to rule — *both on the earth and from the heavens over the earth* [cf. Gen. 1:26-28; 22:17, 18; 26:3, 4; 28:3, 4, 12-15].

Israel realized the earthly sphere [the kingdom covenanted to David] for over 800 years [from abt. 1445 BC to abt. 586 BC], though far from realizing this kingdom in its fulness. Israel though will one day realize this sphere of the kingdom in its fulness following their Messiah's return, their national conversion, and the destruction of Gentile world power.)

However, throughout several years of hearing the message which began to be proclaimed first by John the Baptist, then by Christ and His disciples, as seen in the gospel accounts, *Israel*

refused to repent. As a consequence, God took this part of the kingdom away from Israel and, as seen in the second chapter of Acts, called into existence an entirely separate and distinct entity — *the one new man*, “in Christ,” the Church — to be the recipient of that which Israel had rejected (*cf.* Matt. 21:33-43; Eph. 2:11-15; I Peter 2:9, 10).

Then Israel climaxed the nation’s rejection by the crucifixion of the One Who had come from heaven to earth to make the offer.

(The preceding is a somewhat succinct summation of the whole of the matter, providing background material for a continuation, seen in Acts [next section].)

For additional information, refer to the author’s book, FROM ACTS TO THE EPISTLES, or to any one of a number of other books where the author has dealt with this subject after some fashion.)

Message to Israel in Acts

Following Christ’s resurrection, He spent forty days with His disciples, “speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God” (Acts 1:3). Then, ten days following His ascension (1:8, 9), in Acts chapter two, as previously seen, Scripture records the bringing into existence of *the one new man*, “in Christ” — the Church — to be the recipient of that which Israel had rejected.

During about the first thirty years of the existence of the Church though (from 33 AD to about 62 AD), there was *a reoffer of the kingdom to Israel — the same kingdom which had been offered in the gospel accounts, the kingdom of the heavens* (in line with the opening verses of the parable of the marriage feast in Matt. 22:1-14).

During the original offer (in the gospel accounts), the message was proclaimed by John the Baptist, Christ, the Twelve, and then the Seventy. During the reoffer (in Acts), the message was proclaimed by *the one new man*, “in Christ,” by *Christians making up this new man*.

This is the message which began in Acts through Peter’s preaching on the day of Pentecost in chapter two. As before, the message was directed to Israel, and the call was *exactly the same*

as before — a call for national repentance, followed by baptism, with the kingdom in view.

(Note Acts 2:37-43 in this respect. The question asked by the Jews listening to Peter's message in v. 37 is not at all the same as the question which the jailer at Philippi asked Paul and Silas in Acts 16:30.

The former was NOT about eternal salvation; the latter was ONLY about eternal salvation.

The question asked in v. 37 by these Jews — “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” — contextually, had to do with what the Jewish people must do to effect correction for previous disobedience. And Peter told them *exactly* what they must do, as seen in v. 38 — “Repent and be baptized every one of you...” [the same message previously proclaimed to Israel in the gospel accounts].

And it can be clearly seen from both Peter's previous reference to *Joel's prophecy* [vv. 16-21] and a subsequent manifestation of *miraculous signs* [v. 43] that this had to do with both *the Jewish people and the kingdom previously proclaimed*. This subsequent manifestation of *miraculous signs was for Israel alone* [I Cor. 1:22], *showing the Jewish people what they could have, if...*

[Signs in the gospels and Acts had to do *solely with Israel in relation to the kingdom* (ref. the author's article, “Signs, Wonders, Miracles”)].

Individuals invariably attempt to read eternal salvation into Acts 2:38, though the entire section deals with something entirely different. And, through reading eternal salvation into this passage, they not only end up corrupting one message but doing away with the correct message seen in the passage.)

This reoffer of the kingdom to Israel continued for about the next thirty years. And it could continue throughout this time simply because the same saved generation of Jews comprising the nation preceding the events of Calvary was still present following Calvary. *The Jew's crucifixion of their King could have wrought no change in their saved position in this respect.*

However, once those comprising this generation began passing off the scene (dying), the reoffer of the kingdom had to cease, for a subsequent saved generation of Jews did not follow this generation.

Death and shed blood following Calvary, providing a substitutionary death for the firstborn, was seen only in the proper application (through believing) of the blood of the Paschal Lamb Whom Israel had slain in 33 AD. And the next generation of Jews, refusing to apply the blood of this slain Lamb, found themselves in an entirely different position from that of the previous generation. They found themselves just as lost as any Gentile.

This reoffer of the kingdom to Israel continued until about 62 AD. And that point in Acts is seen at the end of the book, when Jewish religious leaders in Rome had rejected Paul's message, *with Paul then stating for the third and last time that he was going to take this message to the Gentiles* (Acts 28:17-29; cf. Acts 13:46; 18:6).

Message to Israel and Christians in Romans

Now, with all of the preceding background material at hand, it will be a relatively simple matter to show that which is in view through the way Rom. 1:16 ends — “to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.”

In the Book of Acts, there were no Gentiles saved during the opening few years of the present dispensation. It is not until events in chapter ten, near the beginning of Paul's ministry, that any record exists of Gentiles being saved, with Paul called forth as the apostle to the Gentiles.

Then, during Paul's ministry throughout the remainder of Acts, Paul always followed God's order in Rom. 1:16. When entering a village, *he always went to the Jews in that village first, before going to the Gentiles*, even though he was God's apostle to the Gentiles, as Peter was God's apostle to the Jews (Rom. 11:13; Gal. 2:7).

The Book of Romans was written during the time when the kingdom was being reoffered to Israel, probably some four or five years before the close of this reoffer. This is clearly shown by the statement at the end of Rom. 1:16. Had the book been written following the close of the reoffer of the kingdom to Israel, the statement at the end of this verse would have been completely out of place. But, with the book written during this time, the statement is perfectly in line with events in the Book of Acts.

Then note a similar statement in both verses nine and ten of the next chapter — “to the Jew first, and also of [or ‘to’] the Gentile.” The context of this statement in both verses has to do with *God’s future judgment*, when “God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ...” And in this judgment, the same two types of saved individuals are seen as previously seen back in chapter one (vv. 5-10, 15).

In Rom. 1:16, the good news being proclaimed *to the Jew first* would alone show that the gospel of grace couldn’t be in view. As previously shown, the Jews had already acted upon this message. They had slain the paschal lambs, properly applied the blood, and God, remaining true to His Word, could only have recognized a vicarious death of the firstborn.

Thus, the message in Rom. 1:16, as it relates to the Jews, couldn’t have been the gospel of grace (a message *never* seen “to the Jew first,” *always* seen equally to both Jews and Gentiles); nor, through any sound method of Biblical interpretation, could the message in Rom. 1:16 pertain to the gospel of grace as it would relate to the Gentiles either. *It had to be the same message for both Jews and Gentiles.*

And that message was a reoffer of the kingdom to a saved generation of Jews and an offer of the same kingdom to *the one new man*, “in Christ,” comprised by that time largely of saved Gentiles.

All of this is ultimately seen as part and parcel with the mystery revealed to Paul in Eph. 3:1-6.

In the gospel accounts, the message was *to Israel alone*; in the Book of Acts, the message was *to the Jew first, but also to the Gentile*; then, with the close of the reoffer of the kingdom to Israel, the offer was *to the one new man*, “in Christ” *alone, comprised of both saved Jews and saved Gentiles, though mainly saved Gentiles.*