

COMPELLED

ROMANS 1:1-7, 13-17

INTRODUCTION

Nothing is more important than the gospel of Jesus Christ to the believer and to the unbelieving world. For the believer, it is our hope our joy in the midst of a world in which we long for and await the soon return and breaking of the kingdom of God. To the unbelieving world, the gospel is the means of their escape from the power and the penalty sin and the certain wrath it brings. In this letter of Paul to the Christians at Rome Paul highlights a most glorious picture of the power and the sanctifying work of the gospel upon the church. This letter is a testimony to the power of the gospel that was once located in Jerusalem after Pentecost and now, by its unbridled power, has extended into Rome. Amidst persecution the believers are in great need of this lively hope in Christ to encourage their embattled souls with the truth that nothing can separate us from the love of God. We now enter into a journey of theological and practical delight regarding the active love of God for the people He came to redeem. We begin with the compelling power of the gospel.

THE GOSPEL DESCRIBED (ROM. 1:1-7)

Before Paul describes the gospel, he identifies its effect on his life and soul. He is a *servant* or bond-slave of God, bound to His will singularly (Romans. 1:1). He is an *apostle*, personally commissioned sent out by God as one who was *set apart* for the mission of God (Romans. 1:1). This is how the gospel defines each who believe in Christ: it redefines our existence (we belong to God) and reshapes our calling in life (we are to share the gospel). Thus, all who know Christ must see these words of Paul as descriptions of how we should understand our own life and purpose. When we contemplate Paul's description of the gospel its historical origin should not be missed. Far from being something new, the gospel is what has always been proclaimed because it is *the gospel of God* (Romans. 1:1) and was *promised beforehand* through the prophets (Romans. 1:2). The gospel is about the man Jesus who, by way of lineage, came from David (Matthew 1:1) and, as such, fulfilled the promise concerning the eternal Davidic kingship. Yet, Christ was greater than David (Matthew 22:41-46) and is, therefore, to be referred to as *Jesus Christ our Lord* (Romans. 1:3). His Lordship was confirmed by the affirmation of God when He raised Christ from the dead. Hence, the resurrection is the vindication of His deity (Romans. 1:4). After this grand redemptive look at the gospel Paul now challenges the saints to mission. They have received grace and apostleship (apostle simply means one who is sent and does not refer to the office of apostle) for the purpose of each nation having representatives who are obedient to the Lordship of Christ (Romans. 1:5). Here is the essence of the passage: the gospel of God has so transformed us in order that the nations, through our witness and obedience, would, themselves, bow in adoration to the King of glory (Romans. 1:5).

THE GOSPEL DEBT (ROM. 1:13-15)

We should understand the debt of the gospel in two ways from these verses. Paul starts off this section with the compelling words of wanting to see the Romans. He had never met them but had, in time past, planned to come to them. This desire to see them is expressed in the mutual benefit of fellowship. Though an apostle Paul desire to be encouraged by them in as much as he longed to encourage them (Romans. 1:12). So the debt of the gospel can be seen as the encouragement that we owe to one another. Another aspect of debt is the clear burden to see lives changed and transformed by the gospel of grace. Paul says that he is *obligated* (Romans. 1:14) to do this. It is the weight upon his life to see all people *Greeks and barbarians ... the wise and the foolish* come to know the liberating power of the gospel (Romans. 1:15). This designation of *Greeks* (wise) and the *barbarians* (foolish) is a testimony to the fact that discrimination is eliminated in the mission of God and the church. All need the gospel and,

therefore, all kinds of people will comprise the fellowship of the faithful. The gospel that defines us is also the gospel that we should be burdened to see a multitude of Roman lives transformed under its power (Romans. 1:15).

THE GOSPEL DECLARED (ROM. 1:16-17)

Because of its power on Paul and his desire to see humanity bowing down to the glory of Jesus Christ he declares that his unashamed allegiance to the message of the gospel of the message (Romans. 1:16). Why? It is the power of God to bring about the eternal life of God that changes the destiny of sinners. This power of God is nothing short or less than *the* revelation of the *righteousness of God* in the life, death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ (Romans. 1:17). This revealed righteousness of God is what causes man to be *justified* (declared righteous and not guilty) in the sight of a holy God. To be justified certainly means to be in right standing with God and, according to Paul, it also means something with respect to our living. He says that *The righteous will live by faith* (Romans. 1:17). This means that those whose lives have been redefined by the Lord (Romans. 1:1) and those whose passions and purpose have been reshaped by the gospel (Romans. 1:13-15) should, without shame, proclaim and practice this righteousness to the fallen world (Romans. 1:16-17).