

Gospel in Flesh and Power

Thomas Robinson, *Gospel of God's Grace for All of Us 1*, September 21, 2014

Romans 1:1-15

¹ Paul, a slave of **Messiah Jesus**, called to be an **apostle**, set apart for the **gospel of God**,
² which he **promised** beforehand through his **prophets** in the **holy Scriptures**,
³ concerning **his Son**,
 who was **from David's seed according to the flesh**
⁴ and was declared to be **Son of God in power**
 according to the **Spirit of holiness** by his **resurrection** from the dead,
 Jesus Messiah (anointed king) **our Lord** (LORD, emperor),
⁵ through whom we have received **grace** and **apostleship** to bring about the **obedience of faith**
for the sake of **his name** among all **the nations** (Gentiles), ⁶ including **you** who are **called** to
belong to **Jesus Messiah**.

⁷ To all those in **Rome**, **loved by God** and **called to be saints**:

Grace to you and **peace** from **God** our Father and the **Lord Jesus Messiah**.

⁸ First, I thank my **God** through **Jesus Messiah** for all of **you**, because your **faith** is
proclaimed in all the world. ⁹ For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in **the gospel of**
his Son, that without ceasing I mention you ¹⁰ always in my prayers, asking that somehow by
God's will **I may now at last succeed in coming to you**.

¹¹ For **I long to see you**, that I may impart to you some **spiritual gift** to strengthen you —
¹² that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by **each other's faith**, both yours and mine.

¹³ I do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, that I have often intended to
come to you (but thus far have been prevented), in order that I may reap **some harvest** among
you as well as among the rest of the **Gentiles** (nations).

¹⁴ I am under obligation both to **Greeks** and to **barbarians**, both to the **wise** and to the
foolish. ¹⁵ So I am eager to **preach the gospel** to you also who are in **Rome**.

Romans 15:24-25

²⁴ I hope to see you in passing as I go to Spain, and to be helped on my journey there by you, once I
have enjoyed your company for a while. ²⁵ At present, I am going to Jerusalem bringing aid to the saints.

Isaiah 52:7-10

⁷ How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of **him who brings good news, who publishes peace,**
who brings good news of happiness, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, "Your God reigns."

⁸ The voice of your watchmen— they lift up their voice; together they sing for joy; for eye to eye they see
the return of the LORD (Yahweh) to Zion. ⁹ Break forth together into singing, you waste places of
Jerusalem, for the **LORD (Yahweh) has comforted his people; he has redeemed Jerusalem**. ¹⁰ The **LORD**
(Yahweh) has bared his holy arm before the eyes of **all the nations**, and all the **ends of the earth** shall
see **the salvation of our God**.

2 Samuel 7:12-14a

¹² When your (David's) days are fulfilled ..., **I will raise up your seed after you**, who shall come from
your body, and I will establish his kingdom. ¹³ He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish
the throne of his kingdom forever. ¹⁴ **I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son**.

Philippians 2:9-11

⁹ Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him **the name that is above every name**,

¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

¹¹ and every tongue confess that **Jesus Messiah is LORD, to the glory of God the Father**.

The Gospel of God

We begin explorations of Paul's letter to the church in Rome. Written from Corinth in the winter of 55-56, about 25 yrs. after Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection.

Paul begins by calling himself a slave of Messiah Jesus – Christ = Messiah, anointed King.

Paul is a Roman citizen, a Jew, trained as a rabbi, a Pharisee, a Greek-speaking citizen of Tarsus in Cilicia. A slave?! He is called apostle (emissary), marked off for God's announcement of good news – “the Gospel of God.” That's what this letter is about.

Gospel (*euangelion*) announces something that has happened. It is not primarily religious doctrine, ethics, philosophy, plan of salvation, etc. Though the event affects all of these.

The event is Jesus: By his life and death Jesus is Messiah (God's anointed King) and Lord. The event is the culmination of scripture, God's promises, prophets' anticipations (Isa 52:7-10) and flows out to touch and change every life, both Jews and Gentiles (nations) all people.

Paul and His Journey to Rome

Paul is ending an intense period of work in the Aegean area (Greece & Turkey). He has established churches in major cities and sent out workers into wider regions. He has lived with intense hardship, beatings, imprisonment, shipwreck, etc. (2Cor 11:24-28). But he has brought a message that has transformed the lives of both Jews and pagans, bringing them together in new communities that broke barriers of class, race, religion, gender.

His plan now is to go through Rome to Spain. The church is already strong in Rome, and he hopes that they will help him in the new mission. After he first goes to Jerusalem. But the church in Rome has been experiencing changes. Jews were expelled from Rome by emperor Claudius in 49, who died in 54. Now Jews were returning. After the Jew/Gentile church became entirely Gentile for 5 yrs, again they must deal with Jew/Gentile relations.

Son of God – Son of David. What is a Messiah?

There is a reason that this Gospel breaks down strong barriers among people. Because at its heart is the event that broke the fundamental separation between God and humans.

If that barrier can be crossed, no artificial wall can stand. It is captured in the phrase 'God's son' (v 3-4). For Christians the phrase came to mean 'divine,' but not in Paul's day.

For Jews like Paul, 'God's son' referred to Israel (Ex 4:22), or to the Davidic king who embodied, Israel (2Sam 7:12). The anointed king, Messiah/Christ, was son of David and thus God's son, without any suggestion of divinity. But Israel had had no legitimate Davidic king since the Babylonian exile. What of the promises (Ps 89; Ps 2)? When would the anointed one come?

Son of God in Power

The promises were also expressed as God's coming to his people; “*the return of the LORD to Zion*” (Is 52:8). The “*arm of the LORD*,” God's own intervention, who is also “*servant of the Lord*” to heal his people (Is 53) was anticipated. How could varied hopes come together?

That was the great announcement of God “concerning his son” (v 3). One who was flesh, the seed of David like many others, was also Son of God in a new sense, in power, the presence of God (Phi 2:6-11). God was indeed visiting his people; Yahweh was returning to Zion.

This was challenging, seeing One God with new depth. But it was proclaimed by the breaking of another barrier, between the present and the future. God promised the healing of his creation by resurrection, overcoming death. In Jesus, future resurrection became present.

Through these events, Jesus reveals a deep reality of God that gives all humans new identity: grace, love, peace, uniting peoples. Greeks, Romans, Jews, all are called, loved, transformed.