

For Session 2 Robert Jewett

'Romans' in

*The Cambridge Companion to St. Paul*

Ed. James D.G. Dunn

Cambridge: CUP pp 91-104

## 6 Romans

ROBERT JEWETT

The longest and most influential of Paul's letters has a complex textual history, with fourteen families of texts featuring varied arrangements of the final chapters. While many earlier scholars tended to view chapter 16 as not originally intended for Rome, recent studies have demonstrated that the original version of the letter contained the material of all sixteen chapters. It is likely, but far from generally accepted, that 16:17–20 and 16:25–57 are interpolations reflecting later interpretations of the letter.

Romans is carefully organized, with an introduction in 1:1–15, a thesis statement in 1:16–17, four proofs (1:18–4:25; 5:1–8:39; 9:1–11:36; and 12:1–15:13), and an elaborate conclusion in 15:14–16:24. From the perspective of classical rhetoric, Romans is an 'ambassadorial' message in the demonstrative genre that seeks to encourage a particular ethos in the audience so they will support a project that Paul has in mind. The introduction and conclusion indicate that the primary purpose of the original letter was to elicit support for Paul's mission to Spain, mentioned in 15:24, 28. Since there was no significant Jewish population in Spain at this time, which eliminated the possibility of starting a mission in the usual manner in a Jewish synagogue, advance preparations were required. A significant series of linguistic barriers needed to be crossed, translating Old Testament and early Christian materials into Latin and then into the Celt-Iberian dialects still employed by most of the population in Spain. Paul needed the assistance of the Christians in Rome in making such preparations, and since he had not founded that church, he had to introduce himself and his gospel in order to persuade the Romans to cooperate in this daunting project.

Romans was sent in the spring of c. 57 with Phoebe, the leader of a church near Corinth and a wealthy patron who had probably agreed to underwrite the Spanish project (16:1–2). After Paul delivers the Jerusalem offering (15:25–32) in the summer of 57, he intends to sail to Rome and then to travel westward to Spain, which was considered to be the end of the known world. But he was imprisoned in Jerusalem, was detained for two years in a Caesarean prison, and arrived in Rome in chains (Acts 21–8),

probably suffering execution in CE 62 before being able to carry out the missionary project that this letter was intended to stimulate.

The situation in the Roman churches has been reconstructed from evidence throughout the letter, and especially from the introduction and conclusion. Chapter 16 reflects Paul's knowledge of five groups of believers with differing leadership patterns and orientations, although in view of the large number of martyrs under Nero seven years later (Tacitus, *Annals* 15.44), there must have been many more groups. From inferences in Paul's greetings to a large number of leaders whom he had met during their exile from Rome after the Edict of Claudius (probably in CE 49), it appears likely that the Christian movement began in Roman synagogues sometime in the decade of the thirties.

After the synagogues were closed during the period of the edict (i.e. CE 49–54), the Christian cells probably moved to houses and tenement spaces, and since many of the original Jewish-Christian leaders were now absent, new leaders emerged from Gentile backgrounds. Peter Lampe has shown that the densest groupings of early Christian congregations were in two of the worst slums in Rome, where there was the highest density of tenement buildings. This gives rise to the theory of 'tenement churches' that met in living and workshop spaces in insula ('tenement') buildings, in contrast to a 'house church' such as that in the home of Prisca and Aquila (Rom 16:5). Lampe has also demonstrated the fractured nature of Roman Christianity which lacked a central organization. Conflicts between the 'weak' and the 'strong' apparently had arisen over liturgy and ethics, involving social and ethnic tensions between Gentile and Jewish Christians (Romans 14). By reformulating the gospel to find common ground, Paul seeks to overcome such conflicts, which would jeopardize sponsorship of the Spanish mission.

#### OPENING (1:1–17)

Paul's care to address various groups in Rome is visible throughout the introduction, which features a composite creed (1:3–4) and a threefold address, to the 'called of Jesus Christ', the 'called to be saints', and 'God's beloved in Rome' (1:6–7). Particularly significant is Paul's sense of missionary obligation expressed in 1:14–15, 'both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the educated and the uneducated' in Rome. Here Paul reverses the most significant barriers of honour and shame in Graeco-Roman culture, indicating that his mission was particularly aimed at an audience such as the barbarians in Spain, who had repeatedly resisted Roman rule and were

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viewed, along with other barbarians, as a lethal threat to civilization. These references provide the background for the thesis in 1:16–17, which states that Paul is 'not ashamed of the gospel'.

According to the standards of the culture, he should be ashamed of proclaiming the crucified one as the redeemer of the world, including even the barbarians and the uneducated. The gospel is the 'power of God' because it overcomes the hostile boundaries of honour and shame in offering salvation to 'every one who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek'. Paul cites Hab. 2:4 that 'the righteous shall live by faith', which overturns the superiority claims of those who conform to the law or to the high standards of Graeco-Roman culture. This introduction demonstrates that Romans should be interpreted as a missionary document, not as an abstract, theological treatise. It moves from the missionary diplomacy of this introduction to the hope that with the completion of the mission, 'all the peoples' (15:11) will come to praise God in harmony and with 'one voice' (15:5–6), because their lethal competition that threatens the peace of the world has been overcome by the message of Christ crucified for all.

#### FIRST PROOF (1:18–4:25)

In the first proof Paul confirms the thesis that God's righteousness is revealed in the gospel of Christ crucified. In order to shatter the superiority claims encouraged by Roman culture, which had infected the 'weak' and the 'strong' in their competition with each other, Paul argues that God's wrath stands against those who 'suppress the truth' by 'worshipping the creature rather than the creator' (1:25). The cross of Christ reveals the unacknowledged tendency to stamp out the truth, to wage war against God, so that humans and institutions can maintain their guise of superior virtue and honour.

All groups are involved in this perverse competition, but most of the details in 1:18–32 reflect traditional critiques of Graeco-Roman religion and culture. Sexual perversions, in particular, are depicted as evidence of God's wrath currently visible (1:26–7). A catalogue of antisocial types of persons whose destructive actions are proof of divine wrath completes this paragraph, shattering any claim of Roman cultural superiority (1:29–32). The depiction of Gentiles who 'do what the law requires' because it is written on their hearts (2:14–15) shows that no superiority claim of Jews against Gentiles can be correct. When Paul lists the boasts of Jews in 2:17–20, he is attempting to articulate the kind of pride and arrogance that was surfacing in the Jewish Christians in Rome, not to make a general case

against the Judaism of his day. But he goes on to show that the entire human race is 'under the power of sin' (3:9). The claim that 'Jews as well as Greeks are all under sin' (3:9) is followed by a series of scriptural citations that repeat no fewer than eight times that 'no one' can claim righteous status or performance. In the light of the parameters established in 1:14 and developed in 1:18–32, this undercuts the superiority claims of every system of gaining honour through performance or inherited status. It follows that 'from works of law no flesh will be set right before God' (3:20). It is not just the Jewish law that is in view here, but law as an identity marker for any culture. In the face of the impartial righteousness of God, no human system of competing for glory and honour can stand.

In response to this universal distortion, Christ was 'put forward as a mercy seat' (3:25), replacing the Jewish temple with a new institution of atonement that is open 'through faith' to everyone. To be 'made righteous' in the context of the Christ (3:21) means that humans who have fallen short of the 'glory of God' (3:23) have such glory and honour restored, not as an achievement but as a gift. The threefold reference in Rom. 3:24 to divine 'grace', to the 'gift', and to 'redemption' through Christ makes it plain that no one gains this honourable, righteous status by outperforming others or by privilege of birth or wealth. In contrast to the hyper-competitive environment of the Graeco-Roman world, including its Jewish component, this new status is granted by Christ only to those whose shame is manifest. The issue here is not whether individual forgiveness is available but how the universal deficit in honour is overcome by grace. The word 'justification' is inadequate here, because it implies individual alibis and a primarily forensic context; a translation such as 'make righteous' shows the link with the 'righteousness of God' that Paul has in mind. 'Faith' in this context is a matter of accepting the gospel of Christ crucified, which means that all boasting is excluded (3:27). The mainspring of the Greco-Roman and Jewish systems of honour and shame was removed by Christ. Salvation is by grace alone. Henceforth no group can claim priority in God's sight, because boasting has been exposed as an assault on the oneness of God (3:29–30).

If people are made righteous only through faith, what of the promises made to Abraham that his descendants would inherit the earth? In chapter 4, Abraham is shown to be the ancestor of those 'having faith in the One who makes the ungodly righteous' (4:5). The promise was made to him prior to the gift of the law or to his own circumcision, so he becomes the father of both Jews and Gentiles who emulate his faith (4:9–12). The promise was fulfilled only because of Abraham's faith, not because of his conformity to the law. He believed in the God 'who gives life to the dead and calls that

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which does not exist into being' (4:17), a citation of confessional material which implies that faith in Christ crucified and resurrected is the way to inherit Abraham's promise (4:23-5).

### SECOND PROOF (5:1-8:39)

The second proof elaborates and defends the thesis about righteousness through faith, beginning with the admonition 'let us have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ' (5:1), which entails abandoning the boasting that amounts to a declaration of war against God. Henceforth Christians are to 'boast in the hope of the glory of God' (5:2), which implies turning away from efforts to claim superior honours. Instead, they are to boast in their afflictions (5:3) because they know in Christ that they will not be 'put to shame' since God's love 'has been poured into our hearts through the holy spirit given to us' (5:5). No matter what tragedies they experience, they are certain of God's love. The traditional forms of boasting are no longer needed to gain and sustain their honour in the face of a hostile world. Christ's blood that was shed for the undeserving fills that need, and its consoling message is conveyed by the Spirit directly to the vulnerable hearts of believers, who thereby are enabled to live in confident hope no matter how badly they are treated. In Christ, adversity has lost its power to shame. Having previously made themselves into 'enemies' of God through their boasting in its various forms, claiming superiority to others in order to overcome shame for themselves, they are now 'reconciled to God through the death of his son' (5:10).

By revealing the truth about the human condition, and by the power of divine love to fill the otherwise insatiable yearning for honour, the death of Christ makes peace possible, both with God and with the human race. To boast 'in God through our Lord Jesus Christ' (5:11) is to abandon all human claims of virtue, status, or superiority. And it definitely does not mean boasting that God is on the side of an ethnic group, as in 2:17 ('boasting in God'), because 3:27-31 has closed that door for ever. God is not the possession of either Jews or Gentiles, weak or strong, barbarian or Greek. To boast 'through our Lord Jesus Christ' is to take up the revolution he inaugurated. His blood (5:9) is the source of the grace in which believers stand (5:2), which eliminates all need for boasting, except to boast in the God whose boundless love was expressed in the crucified one. To participate in this revolutionary stance is the 'reconciliation' that believers have 'now received' (5:11), i.e. 'peace with God' (5:1). But the amazing features of Paul's formulation are the future verbs and the modifying phrases, 'we shall be saved by him from the wrath of God... shall be saved by his life'

(5:9, 11). This seems to eliminate the human factor entirely and lacks the eschatological reservation found in other passages. The last judgment will be as much a matter of pure grace as righteousness itself.

At 5:12–21 Paul shows how Christ's life (5:10) defines the future destiny of believers, just as Adam defined the future of his descendants. Having dissociated performance from future salvation in the preceding paragraph, Paul has to provide a new basis for explaining the effect of Christ. This is the purpose of the Adam/Christ comparison; not to develop a 'doctrine' of original sin but to show how the new 'reign' of grace and righteousness extends its influence over 'all people' (5:17, 21). The two realms are antithetical power spheres: the one marked by grace, the free gift, 'rightwising', life, acquittal, obedience, and righteousness; and the other by trespass, judgment, condemnation, death, disobedience, and sin.

This leads to 6:1–14, where Paul describes baptism as participation in Christ's death and resurrection. The syllogism of verses 1–4 shows that grace is not advanced by remaining in sin because baptism marks the death of the sinful self and the beginning of 'newness of life'. The 'obsolete self was crucified' with Christ (6:6) in order to break the reign of sin (6:6, 12–14). To be 'alive to God in Christ Jesus' (6:11) is to be shaped by the reign of grace so that behaviour is no longer determined by conformity to the law and the quest for honour. The mystical relationship between Christ and believers qualifies the entirety of life, removing the members of house and tenement churches from the 'dominion of death' (6:9) enforced by the sinful honour system.

Believers are to allow themselves to be used in the service of Christ, with their bodies dedicated 'to God as instruments of righteousness' (6:13). In contrast to legal compulsion, this is a revolutionary form of enslavement to righteousness (6:15–23) that results in holy behaviour and leads to 'eternal life'. To be 'obedient from the heart' (6:17) is to act in accordance with righteousness because a new motivation has been implanted by grace. Believers are therefore freed from sin (6:18, 22) and from conformity either to law or lawlessness (6:15, 19), not because of their superior virtue or will power but by their involvement in the mystical, all-encompassing realm of holiness inaugurated by Christ (6:18–19). Their salvation remains a matter of receiving the 'free gift of God... in Christ Jesus our Lord' (6:23).

In Rom. 7:5–8 Paul describes how the 'passions that were sinful because of the law' lead humans to 'death'. Paul goes on to explain how sin invades and corrupts the law. 'I did not know sin except through law. For I was unaware of coveting except that the law said, "You shall not covet." But finding foothold through the commandment, the sin worked in me all covetings' (7:7–8).

When Paul speaks of the law, having died to talking about the effect was directly related to his tradition. He had of his tradition. He had a portion of Judaism in the heroic model of Pharaoh to eliminate alleged evil proportion to the passion to the law. Paul's conversion for in his zeal for the law followers; as 7:11 formed itself.

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When Paul speaks in this passage about actually being 'discharged from the law, having died to that in which we were being held down' (7:6), he is talking about the effect of Christ as he had experienced it. Paul's conversion was directly related to his own conformity to the cultural and religious laws of his tradition. He had acted out of the zealous ideology that gripped a portion of Judaism in the period before the Jewish-Roman War, in which the heroic model of Phinehas in Numbers 25 inspired lynching strategies to eliminate alleged evil-doers. His persecution of the church was in direct proportion to the passion with which he maintained his own conformity to the law. Paul's conversion involved discovering his own hostility to God, for in his zeal for the law, he had ended up opposing the Messiah and his followers; as 7:11 formulates it, 'sin deceived me' by corrupting religion itself.

Paul also discovered the murderous consequences of the law when it was corrupted by the human energy of coveting honour. While he had assumed that righteous violence was ordained by God, he suddenly discovered the dilemma of the frustrated zealot: 'I do not do the good that I want' (7:19), reiterating 7:15b-c, using the language of good and evil. The good that Paul had wished to achieve as a persecutor of the church was to advance the rule of the Torah as a means to usher in the messianic age. He had sought to follow the will of God but discovered through the encounter with the risen Lord that he was in fact opposing the Messiah. What 7:19 describes is not an inability to obey the law as Paul understood it, but rather the failure of zealous obedience to produce the good. The 'sin dwelling in me' (7:23) is a demonic social power deriving from a distorted system of honour and shame that had infected religion as well as the political realm.

In 8:1-17, the nature of the new life in Christ is described in terms of an ongoing tension between the flesh and the spirit, the old law and the new. Under the power of sin and flesh, the law was distorted and became an instrument of gaining honour for oneself and one's group. But in Christ the law regains its proper, spiritual function that leads to genuine life (7:10-14; 8:4). Thus 8:2 refers to the law derived from the 'spirit of life in Christ Jesus', a spiritual law that functions in the domain of Christ, setting believers free from the compulsion to misuse the law as a means of gaining status. Christ 'condemned the sin in the flesh' (8:3), making it possible for believers to fulfil 'the righteous requirement of the law' (8:4). Rather than treating others as means to gain honour, which was the typical style of the old age of the flesh, the community in which divine law is being fulfilled acts out of genuine love.

The agent of this transformation according to 8:3-4 is God, who sent his son to inaugurate a new form of community by his life, death, and

guiding Spirit. The 'mind of the flesh' and the 'mind of the spirit' (8:5-9) are antithetical orientations to gaining honour. To gain prestige through performance or by virtue of allegedly superior status is the way of the flesh, shaped by the dominant culture both Graeco-Roman and Jewish. To receive the gift of honour as a result of Christ's dying for the ungodly, without making any claim of merit, is the way of the Spirit that leads to 'peace' (8:6).

As verses 9-11 make clear, the mark of the new community is the Spirit that energizes behaviour in this new direction. Its primary arena of manifestation was social enthusiasm, speaking in tongues, prophecy, and joyous celebration in the context of the common meal that united the formerly shamed from different families and backgrounds into a single family honoured and chosen and hallowed by God. To be led in this new direction is to fulfil the role of sons and daughters of God, living not out of fear that one is unacceptable and must struggle ferociously for honour but in the assurance of the Father's love and acceptance (8:14-16). To be child of God in this new sense is to enjoy a joint inheritance of glory with Christ, sharing the promises of God along with the sufferings that Christ experienced. Although a measure of glorification is currently visible among the saints, in partial and vulnerable forms, those who persist in living according to the Spirit will participate in its fulfilment now and at the end of time. But this is not honour that one has earned and thus can boast about; it comes only as a gift of grace, and only in the context of suffering with Christ.

In 8:18-30 Paul shows that the current suffering of the Roman churches is part of the groaning of creation, yearning for redemption from the burden of sin. The Spirit participates in this vulnerability, interceding for believers (8:26-7) and cooperating with them in the achievement of good (8:28). Paul's wording implies divine and human co-responsibility in the face of adversity, and in the context of this letter, the 'good' to be accomplished by this cooperation includes the daily work and congregational formation in behalf of the Roman house and tenement churches as well as the risky mission to Spain that they are being asked to support. The thrust of the argument is encouraging: despite adversity and the ongoing weakness of the congregation, the Spirit labours alongside believers in such tasks.

The paragraph ends with the startling claim that all such persons whom God made righteous were also 'glorified', using a past-tense verb (8:30). Believers are in the process of being glorified according to the image of Christ, as in 2 Cor. 3:18, made radiant with righteousness. Despite present suffering, their status of being called, rectified, and glorified is already visible. The glory that will yet be revealed in a definitive form in the children of God (8:18-19) will one day overcome the ambiguity of life in a fallen

world. But in the work and the work Paul hopes glory has become – and

In the final paragraph question whether anyone them from participating world. Since God makes puts the vital question in the status of other group from misfortune. Paul list been used in the Corinthi genuine apostolicity. The from hardships while arg Paul's could possibly em Rom. 8:36, Paul cites LX by believers are for Chris voices in Rome that Paul those of the Jewish-Christ Paul contends that if Go impeach their honour (8

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world. But in the work that the Spirit already is accomplishing in Rome, and the work Paul hopes they will contribute to the Spanish mission, this glory has become – and will become – partially visible.

In the final paragraph of the second proof (8:31–9), Paul takes up the question whether anyone is able to impeach believers and thus to disqualify them from participating in the glorious new form of sovereignty over the world. Since God makes them righteous and Christ intercedes for them, Paul puts the vital question in 8:35 whether any person should be able to discredit the status of other groups, on the premise that the elect should be exempt from misfortune. Paul lists seven forms of hardship in this verse, which had been used in the Corinthian crisis to show that he was disqualified from genuine apostolicity. The Corinthian super-apostles had claimed exemption from hardships while arguing that no one whose career was as troubled as Paul's could possibly embody the power of Christ (2 Corinthians 10–13). In Rom. 8:36, Paul cites LXX Ps. 43:23 to prove that the tribulations suffered by believers are for Christ's sake, which makes full sense only if there were voices in Rome that Paul wishes to counter, arguing that sufferings such as those of the Jewish-Christian exiles disqualified them as genuine disciples. Paul contends that if God loves them, no power on earth or heaven can impeach their honour (8:37–9).

### THIRD PROOF (9:1–11:36)

The third proof deals with Israel's unbelief and the mystery of divine election. The issue is whether God's promise to Israel has failed (9:6), which in the words of the thesis would imply that the gospel is not 'the power of God for salvation' (1:16). In an extensive midrashic discourse, 9:6–18 cites Gen. 21:12 as the initial text and Gen. 18:10, Gen. 25:23, Mal.1:2–3, Exod. 33:19, and Exod. 9:16 as the supplemental texts. This midrash creates a logical proof of the thesis in 9:6a by developing a distinction between the true Israel and Israel as a whole. Divine selectivity is seen to be at work in the designations of Isaac and Jacob as the recipients of mercy. The objection to the gospel in terms of its alleged allowance of divine 'injustice' implies a curtailing of this divine freedom. Thus the reiteration of God's active 'will' not only stands in contrast to the impotence of human willing (9:16) but also carries forward the logic of 'God's selective purpose' (9:11). When this argumentative thrust is taken into account, it becomes clear that the truly scandalous form of selectivity was that God 'has mercy on whom he wills', namely, on those who did not deserve it. This matter of honour and shame was the nub of the issue, both in Paul's former persecution of the church and in current Jewish repudiations of the gospel. It is also the point repeatedly

discussed in this passage, that none of the patriarchs earned the blessing in any way.

In 9:17 Paul applies a widely shared teaching about Pharaoh's hardening in order to make the much more controversial case that God's mercy is sovereign. Paul was convinced that the refusal of this sovereign mercy revealed in the gospel placed his Jewish compatriots in the role of Pharaoh, incredibly reversing their status before God. In 9:19–29 Paul takes up the question that derives from election, namely, whether God can hold anyone accountable for failing to perform. Midrashic citations are employed to show that God remains just and that the potter has a right to mould his clay as he wishes. Citations from Hosea are fused in 9:25–6 to show that the true Israel consists of those now being called from both Jews and Gentiles to participate in the new community of faith. In 9:27 Paul cites an Isaiah text to suggest that the remnant from the 'sons of Israel' are current believers in Christ. The passage ends with an Isaiah quotation showing that the true Israel as the seed of Abraham will pass through judgment and be 'left to us', implying participation through God's mercy in the faith community of Jews and Gentiles embodied in the church.

In 9:30–10:4 Paul discusses the implications of Gentiles gaining righteousness while Israel continued to prefer works over faith. They struck the 'stumbling stone' of Christ because he opposed the religion of works. Paul explains that non-believing Israel demonstrates 'zeal for God but without knowledge', which alludes to the idealization of Phinehas and Elijah as paragons of Jewish zealotism in the kind of Judaism that Paul had favoured prior to his conversion. Zeal refers to the intensity with which believers maintain their allegiance to God and, especially in the period of the Jewish resistance movement, to the Torah. The lack of 'knowledge' refers to a failure to acknowledge the way God's righteousness is embodied in Christ. Paul's fellow Jews were 'seeking to validate their own righteousness' (10:3), implying a competitive stance in which one's 'own' accomplishment is being compared with others. Although this is usually taken in a strictly individualistic manner, it also refers to the sense of ethnic or sectarian righteousness boasted by various groups in the Mediterranean world. The words 'Christ is the goal of the law' (10:4) serve to explain the misunderstanding about the purpose of the law manifest in the phenomenon of competitive zeal. In Christ righteousness can be gained without conforming to the mores of any culture. Christ thus reveals and accomplishes the original goal of the law, which had been subverted by competition for honour and by ascribing shame to outsiders. Salvation is open to 'all who believe' in the gospel, which transcends the ethnic boundaries between Greeks and Jews and barbarians that have been mentioned repeatedly in the letter.

In 10:5–13 the discourse 'Christ up' indicates that the century was to usher in a new motivation is now outmoded. The resurrection, and revealing his death on the cross. The Lord (10:9–10), and the conformity that led to his honour through meeting was overthrown.

The threefold reference is more than a set of beliefs motivating centre of mind ordinarily dominated by the power to expose. As you, on your lips and in proclaim' (10:8). Paul knew faith, that it is deeply and will recognize its consistency. Romans proclaims. He goes to the heart; it is already 'new section, which celebrated by a portion of Israel (10:17) and is destined to Ps. 18:5, the mission to the ultimate conversion.

In 11:1–24 Paul deals by abandoning her. A faith (11:5–6) and the hardening engender feelings of superiority. God has the power to 'graft olive tree' where they believe 'terry' that Israel's zeal for the Gentiles so that ultimate grace is warranted on the disobedience, in order to hymn to the mysterious from Isa. 40:13 and Job 4 knowledge, God alone depends on this theme, because Christianity did not pre-

In 10:5–13 the discussion of how to ‘bring Christ down’ and ‘bring Christ up’ indicates that the motivation of zealous obedience in the first century was to usher in the messianic age. Paul’s basic critique is that this motivation is now outmoded, since Jesus came as the Christ, proven by the resurrection, and revealing the central problem with religious zeal through his death on the cross. The shamed, crucified one is confessed here to be the Lord (10:9–10), and it was precisely the demand for religious and moral conformity that led to his death. In his crucifixion the entire realm of gaining honour through meeting the conditions of approved behaviour and belief was overthrown.

The threefold reference to ‘heart’ in 10:8–10 shows that for Paul faith is more than a set of beliefs. It is related to the condition of the heart, that motivating centre of mind, emotion, experience, and purpose. This is a realm ordinarily dominated by shameful secrets that faith in Christ crucified has the power to expose. As this text proclaims, the redeeming “word is near you, on your lips and in your heart”, that is, the word of faith that we proclaim’ (10:8). Paul knows that the Romans have been living out this faith, that it is deeply anchored in their converted hearts, and thus that they will recognize its consistency with the ‘word of faith’ that the letter to the Romans proclaims. He gives priority here to the message fastened deeply in the heart; it is already ‘near’ them. This correlates closely with the following section, which celebrates the preaching of the gospel despite its rejection by a portion of Israel (10:14–21). Since ‘faith comes from what is heard’ (10:17) and is destined to ‘go out to the ends of the world’, a citation from Ps. 18:5, the mission to Spain has scriptural warrant and could stimulate the ultimate conversion of Israel itself (10:19).

In 11:1–24 Paul deals with whether God responds to Israel’s reluctance by abandoning her. A faithful remnant currently being saved ‘by grace’ (11:5–6) and the hardening of others are temporary matters that should not engender feelings of superiority on the part of Gentile Christians (11:17–22). God has the power to ‘graft’ the distant Israelites back into ‘their own wild olive tree’ where they belong (11:23–4). In 11:25–32, he sets forth the ‘mystery’ that Israel’s zeal for salvation will be provoked by the conversion of the Gentiles so that ultimately ‘all Israel will be saved’ (11:25–6). No arrogance is warranted on either side, because ‘God consigned all persons to disobedience, in order to have mercy on all’ (11:32). This is followed by a hymn to the mysterious mind of God (11:33–6) that incorporates citations from Isa. 40:13 and Job 41:3 showing that while no human can have perfect knowledge, God alone deserves to be glorified. It is well that the third proof ends on this theme, because in fact Paul’s prediction of Israel’s conversion to Christianity did not prove to be accurate.



implicit claim that had been demolished by 1:18–3:20. What remains is the simple fact of divine appointment, a matter justified not by the virtue of the appointee but by the mysterious mind of God, who elects whom God wills as the agents of divine purpose (9:14–33; 11:17–32). Submission to the governmental authorities is therefore an expression of respect not for the authorities themselves but for the crucified deity who stands behind them.

In 13:8–10 Paul goes on to urge that social obligations are to be transcended by mutual love, which alone fulfils the law. This short paragraph concludes with a saying that requires accurate translation to reflect Paul's use of the article and the chiasmic sequence: 'the love does no evil to the neighbour; therefore law's fulfilment is the love'. The logical social corollary to 'the love' in this verse is the agape meal otherwise known as the love-feast, the common meal shared by most sectors of the early church in connection with the Lord's Supper. The reference to 'law's fulfilment' reflects that fact that the greatest barrier to intercommunion in the Roman situation was the insistence on conformity to various forms of law, which divided the weak from the strong and prevented the celebration of the love-feast together.

These often raucous celebrations provide the context for the following paragraph, warning against unseemly behaviour. Whereas the Greeks divinized Dispute or Emulation as energizing powers and the Jewish nationalists advocated zealotism, the early Christian revolution in the honour and shame system turned these virtues into vices, viewing 'strife' and 'zealotry' as factors of the old age (13:13), as deeds of darkness that eroded the equality of believers and destroyed the faith community.

In 14:1–15:13, Paul counters the competition for honour between the Roman churches. His basic point is that to despise and judge fellow Christians is to lose sight of who the Lord is. If God has 'welcomed' one's opponent (14:3) and if God is the one before whom competitors 'stand or fall' (14:5–6), then the continuation of hostilities constitutes an assault on God. Mutual welcome is therefore appropriate (14:1; 15:7), whose social context in the situation of the Roman churches would be shared invitations to love-feasts. While insisting that 'nothing is profane in itself, except that if a person reckons it profane, it is profane for that one', Paul goes on to argue that 'if your brother is grieved by food, you are no longer walking according to love' (14:14–15). His protection of the 'weak' is balanced by protecting the integrity of the strong (14:16). This is a revolutionary form of social tolerance that allows differences to stand while reaching out to accept others as equal members of the body of Christ. To build up 'one another' (14:19) clearly implies that both the weak and the strong are to undertake this task of edifying the other side. Then by citing LXX Ps. 68:10 in Rom. 15:3, Paul suggests

that the contempt and judging within the Roman congregations add to the shameful reproach that Christ bore on the cross for the sake of all. This lends force to the admonition that the competing house churches should seek to 'please the neighbour' in 15:2, adding to the other group's honour and integrity rather than participating in mutual shaming. By overcoming these conflicts, the Christians in Rome will be enabled to join their voices in praise of the same God (15:6) and to participate credibly in augmenting the global chorus that will one day unite the warring world (15:9–13).

#### PERORATION (15:14–16:24)

The peroration urges participation in Paul's missionary endeavours and mutual welcome by various house and tenement churches in Rome. Following the guidelines of classical rhetoric, this section provides an emotional appeal in support of the missionary goal that Paul wishes to advance. His mission has already extended as far west as Illyricum (15:19), and Paul plans to conclude his work in the east and move to Spain, thus completing the circle of the known world. He explains his final errand to deliver the Jerusalem offering (15:25–32) and then asks the Roman house and tenement churches to extend greetings to each other's leaders and to 'greet one another with a holy kiss', acknowledging that both the weak and the strong have a legitimate right to be considered part of the Christian family.

To greet and welcome one another into their fellowships, which would have consisted of celebrations of the sacrificial death of Christ and his enlivening presence among them, is to participate in the 'grace of our Lord Jesus Christ', which concludes the letter in 16:24. In order for the revolution of divine grace through Christ to be extended in a credible manner to the barbarians at the end of the known world, it must first be embodied in transformed relations between the Christians themselves, riven by ethnic and theological conflict. Only in this way can the thesis of Romans be fully demonstrated, that the 'gospel is the power of God for salvation to every one who has faith' (1:16).

## 7 Philippians

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