

# ROMANS (1:11-17)

## *Obligated, Eager, & Unashamed*

PART 2 - JUNE 13, 2004

### EXPELLED FROM ROME

Before Romans was written, Claudius was Emperor (41-54 A.D.) The ancient historian Suetonius (69-140 A.D.) recorded that Claudius “expelled all the Jews from Rome because they were constantly rioting at the instigation of Chrestus.”

- Most scholars agree that “Chrestus” means “Christ”.

Apparently, the disputes between the Jews over the claims of Christ became so fierce that the Emperor kicked ‘em all out.

While Paul was conducting his second missionary journey, he met a recently expelled Jewish couple who had moved to Corinth.

After this, Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. There he met a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had ordered all the Jews to leave Rome. Paul went to see them, and because he was a tentmaker as they were, he stayed and worked with them. - *Acts 18:1-3 NIV*

For several years, the Christian church in Rome was composed entirely of - and heavily influenced by - Gentiles.

- Then Claudius dies in A.D. 54 and his edict is repealed.

But when the Christian Jews returned to Rome, there was tension between them and the gentiles which Paul must confront.

At the end of this letter, Paul greets two special Jewish Christians who share his love and devotion for the gentiles.

Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus. They risked their lives for me. Not only I but all the churches of the Gentiles are grateful to them. Greet also the church that meets at their house. - *Romans 16:3-5 NIV*

The Roman church, in part, was made up of people (like Paul’s old tent-making partners from Corinth) who agreed with Paul that the gospel has overcome the distinction between Jew and Gentile.

## READING ROMANS

I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong – that is, that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other’s faith. I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that I planned many times to come to you (but have been prevented from doing so until now) in order that I might have a harvest among you, just as I have had among the other Gentiles. I am obligated both to Greeks and non-Greeks, both to the wise and the foolish. That is why I am so eager to preach the gospel also to you who are at Rome. I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: “The righteous will live by faith.” - *Romans 1:11-18 NIV*

## SHARING OUR GIFTS

I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual **gift** to make you **strong** – that is, that you and I may be mutually **encouraged** by each other’s **faith**. - *Romans 1:11-12 NIV*

Paul’s imparted gift was his ability to teach the gospel. And he rightly expected not only to give, but to receive.

- Faith doesn’t grow well in a vacuum (or in isolation).

No matter how wise we become, we’ll always need each other.

When we share our **gifts** (God-given abilities to use in his body) and our **faith** (convictions and consistency) two things happen: Other believers are **strengthened** and **encouraged**.

Q: Do you share well?

I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that I planned many times to come to you (but have been prevented from doing so until now) in order that I might have a harvest among you, just as I have had among the other Gentiles. - *Romans 1:13 NIV*

Paul feels bad that he hasn’t visited. He’s converted many of these people on his missionary journeys over the past ten years. However, he has many obligations to all the churches he’s started.

**I am obligated** both to Greeks and non-Greeks, both to the wise and the foolish. That is why **I am so eager** to preach the gospel also to you who are at Rome. **I am not ashamed** of the gospel ... - *Romans 1:14-16 NIV*

Look at “Greeks and non-Greeks”. Most translations say: Greeks and *barbarians*. Greeks applied the word *barbarian* to people who didn’t speak Greek, because it sounded like *jabber* (“bar-bar”).

- The non-Greeks were considered to be uncultured and ignorant.
- So, Paul declares that there is no pecking order in God’s Kingdom.

And now, Paul expresses his heart with three “I am” statements: **I am obligated** to share the gospel. **I am eager** to preach the gospel. **I am not ashamed** of the gospel.

Q: Do you feel obligated to share the good news?

Q: Are you eager for an opportunity to share it?

If someone discovered a cure for all cancer – a simple injection that would wipe it out – would you say they have a moral obligation to share their discovery? Of course; and we’d expect them to be *eager* to share it. If they refused, they’d be robbing the world.

- If we’re not sharing, we’re robbing.

If you’ve discovered eternal life and forgiveness & relief from sin & shame, yet you *don’t* feel *obligated* or *eager* to share it with others, there are Three Possible Reasons:

1. You underestimate the power of what you’ve discovered.
2. You underestimate the need for what you’ve discovered.
3. You lack the compassion for those who could be helped.

Q: Could your coworkers or friends ever assume you’re ashamed of your faith by the way you avoid talking about it?

I am not ashamed of the gospel, because **it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes**: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. - *Romans 1:16 NIV*

Paul’s great love and compassion was felt by Jew and Gentile, the cultured and uncultured, the intelligent and ignorant. Paul was eager to pay the debt he owed to Christ

He wasn’t ashamed of what he’d discovered for three reasons:

1. He recognized its supremacy (**it is the power of God**)

Paul was schooled in Greek logic, Roman law, and Hebrew theology and he knew that every religion and philosophy paled before the power of the gospel of grace.

- It can bring rough and tough men weeping to their knees.
- It can empower 90 pound elderly women to move mountains.

Rome was a superpower and Romans understood power and authority.

2. He recognized its sufficiency (for the salvation of everyone)

Everyone was designed with a vacuum – an unrest - satisfied only by connection to our Creator – friendship with our Father. And this relationship has been made possible through only One.

- Everyone requires and desires Jesus Christ ... whether or not they know His name.

And when Paul writes “First the Jew, then the Gentile,” he’s simply speaking chronologically. That was the order it came in.

Q: Remember Jewish/Gentile tension in the Roman church?

Paul’s reminding the gentiles (who dominate the church) that their faith has come through the Jews. God spoke prophetically through, and demonstrated His nature through the Hebrews.

3. He recognized its simplicity – (everyone who believes)

We’re not required to earn our salvation; just to trust in God’s Son as our Savior from sin – and live a life of appreciation.

Q: How could I be ashamed to share something so simple?

Q: How could I not be eager to share something so sufficient?

Q: How could I not feel obligated to share something so supreme?

For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: “The righteous will live by faith.” - *Romans 1:17 NIV*

A “faith from first to last”; it starts with faith, and ends with faith, and it’s faith all the way through. Some translations say, “From faith to faith.” Paul punctuates this passage by quoting the OT Prophet Habakkuk:

... the righteous will live by his faith ... - *Habakkuk 2:4 NIV*

Just as we live from breath-to-breath we must live from faith-to-faith. You can’t live on the breath you took yesterday.

Have you ever stayed under water too long? Did you feel obligated to breath? Were you eager to breath? Were you ashamed to breath?

- If we hold our faith in too long, we’ll suffocate it.