

SALVATION IN ROMANS

PART I

SALVATION PAST, OR SALVATION PRESENT AND FUTURE?

By Arlen L. Chirwood

“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).

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 pamphlet (also see Part II of this pamphlet series).

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 of this pamphlet series).

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).

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