

Roman 10: 5-15

**¹⁴ Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart
be acceptable to you,
O LORD, my rock and my redeemer.**

This is installment eight on our series on Paul's letter to the Romans. In the first lesson on Paul's letter to the Romans, we heard how Paul's letter influenced Christianity, and not only Christianity, but all western civilization. Fr. Perry told about Augustine of Hippo who was converted to Christianity after reading Paul's letter; Martin Luther lectured on Romans the; outcome was the protestant reformation. He also emphasized almost every influential Christian thinker has dealt with Paul's letter to the Romans.

Gregg, in his lesson gave us a timeframe of when Paul wrote his letter, 54 to 59 CE. Gregg also showed that Paul's letter to the Romans was "...a

Concise outline of the Christian faith. Paul is in essence the architect of the Christian faith as we know it today. In chapters 1 through 5 of his letter to the Romans he summarizes and defines the meaning of the gospel: the good news of Jesus the Christ, the Messiah born to us, champion of the poor, the lost, the last, and the least; crucified at the hands of injustice, but then resurrected from the grave to rise triumphant over the forces of evil and the finality of death. ..."

Rev. Leonetti told us about sin and how we become slaves to sin because sin is so attractive and so seductive. He ended with Rom 6:23 "For the wages of sin is death. The the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Fr. David gave a description of Paul as a faithful Jew who believed in Jesus of Nazareth as the true Messiah, the son of God.

First, I want to explore the people of Rome, who were they? What were they like? What was life like in the first century of the C E? Who was Paul's letter sent to? Who delivered the letter and how was it presented and received? And why did Paul write Romans?

Well, here is a *brief* history lesson on first century Rome.

Two thousand years ago, the world was ruled by Rome. From England to Africa and from Syria to Spain. One in every four people on earth lived and died under Roman law. Wealth and men dominated the roman social structure. For the wealthy Romans life was good, living in beautiful houses in the hills. The lifestyle was extravagant surrounded by servants and slaves, living much like the rich and famous of today. The poor lived in squalid houses that could collapse or burn at any time. If times were difficult babies were left in the streets, hoping someone would take them in as a servant or slave. The poor Romans were entertained by chariot races and gladiators fighting for their lives. The head of the household was the Man, the wife looked after the household, but he controlled it. He also decided the fate of the children. Romans of all classes enjoyed visiting the baths after work+ there they would socialize with one another. There was a definite social order in the Roman Empire and strict dress codes; only the emperor could wear a purple toga, while senators wore white togas with a *latus clavus*, this is a broad purple stripe

along the edge; Equestrians (they were immediately beneath the senators) they had a narrow purple clavus. Then came the citizens and the slaves. There was no large middle class.

What was the early church like in Rome? In the first century of the CE, Jews lived across the Roman Empire. They practiced a different religion than their neighbors; and as a result the Jewish communities were tight knit. Being lenient, Roman law classified the synagogues as colleges, places of learning. Within these synagogues was the sect of the followers of Jesus. Jesus' message was spreading throughout the empire. Gentiles hearing message of Jesus and his followers, attended the services and became part of the synagogue, if only to hear the message of Jesus. While doing my research, I came across an article by Dr. Buehler; he is the international director of the international Christian embassy in Jerusalem. He has an interesting answer to why Paul wrote the letter to Rome. He found that the Roman Emperor Claudius had expelled all the Jews out of Rome. What was the reason for the expulsion? He found that the roman historian Suetonius explained and confirmed that expulsion, because of "disturbances and riots among the Jews at the instigation of Chrestus." Most historians agree Chrestus refers the Christians. And a few decades earlier the Emperor Tiberius expelled all the Jews from Rome to the island at Sardinia. Dr. Buehler writes: **"The expulsion of Jews from Rome is therefore of central importance in understanding Paul's message to the church there. The church in Rome had existed long before Paul ever arrived there. Like other churches in those early decades of the movement, many of the congregants and undoubtedly most of the teachers were Jewish. They were the most versed in the Holy Scriptures, which at that time consisted of only the writings of the Old Testament. Thus when Claudius decided to expel the Jews from Rome, including those who believed in Jesus, this meant the church in Rome was probably the first one entirely made up of Gentiles. This must have presented a great challenge. All the teachers and elders who instructed them every Sabbath were gone!"**

Yet the Holy Spirit was also with them and the Gentile believers managed to keep the church in Rome intact and growing on their own for a season. This likely brought a new sense of confidence, as they discovered the church could still operate without the Jews." When the Emperor Nero allowed the Jews to return to their synagogues, undoubtedly tensions arouse between the Gentiles and the Jews. Paul wanted to establish order in the church in Rome and relieve the tension that had developed and put order to the church. In the greeting of the letter Paul affirms that Jesus "was born of the seed of David according to the flesh." Paul firmly establishes that the roots of the church are in the Jewish faith. The Messiah was not a Roman citizen but a descendent of the House of David.

Now, how did Paul's letter get to Rome? There was no postal service to deliver the letter, no internet, no texting and no tweeting. The letter was delivered by messenger...not a currier! When a letter arrived, the congregation would gather and the messenger, being a skilled reader who had worked through the letter with the author, would deliver it. We read Paul's letter a few verses at a time along with a reading from the Hebrew Testament a Psalm and then a reading from one of the four Gospels. I don't think our, or I know my attention span would last the reading on the whole letter, so we break it up.

I guess that brings us to today's reading Rm. 10:5-15. To clarify today's lesson we should also read Vs 4 **"For Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone**

who believes.” This verse is important, so let me repeat it **“For Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.”** Then our lesson begins

⁵ Moses writes concerning the righteousness that comes from the law that “the person who does these things will live by them.” ⁶ But the righteousness that comes from faith says, “Do not say in your heart, ‘Who will ascend into heaven?’” (that is, to bring Christ down) ⁷ “or ‘Who will descend into the abyss?’” (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). ⁸ But what does it say?

**“The word is near you,
on your lips and in your heart”**

(that is, the word of faith that we proclaim); ⁹ because^[a] if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

Paul knows that vs. 4 sounds blasphemous and now begins to explain the contrast between faith righteousness and legal righteousness. Legal righteousness puts the accent on human activity. The new Christian righteousness does not begin with the demand of moral effort. It is concerned with the response of the heart and an inward conviction of something God has done in Christ. Paul has established a new way of believing, rather than doing, as the approach to right conduct. This concept helped to unite the Jews (the followers of the way) who struggled with the law, and the Gentiles who struggled with morality.

Now let’s look at vs. 10-13

¹⁰ For one believes with the heart and so is justified, and one confesses with the mouth and so is saved. ¹¹ The scripture says, “No one who believes in him will be put to shame.” ¹² For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and is generous to all who call on him. ¹³ For, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

Paul asserts in this passage that Jesus is part of God and is lord of all. Not bound by law, but bound by faith and love, and it doesn’t matter if you are Greek or Jew, the Lord is there for those who have faith and call upon him.

The reading ends **¹⁴ But how are they to call on one in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him? ¹⁵ And how are they to proclaim him unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!”**

This must be where you and I come in. With steadfast faith, knowledge of the law, a profound love of Christ Jesus, we must seek out those who haven’t heard, or believed, and proclaim the Good news of Christ our lord.

Paul brought an understanding of Christ Jesus not only to the Jewish community of Rome but introduced Christ Jesus to the world, a man out of the House of David, the Messiah, and the bearer of Good News. **“How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!”**

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