

Romans 1:1-7 **“The church’s restoration work”**

“Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God, the gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures regarding his Son, who as to his human natures was a descendant of David, and who through the Spirit a of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of *God* by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord.

“Through him and for his name's sake, we received grace and apostleship to call people from among all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith. And you also are among those who are called to belong to Jesus Christ.

“To all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints. Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.”

In this age of tweets, blogs, and emails, few people write letters.

Longhand correspondence seems doomed to extinction.

Handwritten letters might become rarer than a full brontosaurus skeleton.

Scarcer than another movie like “It’s a Wonderful Life.”

Media types want to know if people pay attention.

Tweets might be quoted an hour or day later.

But tweets resemble July 4th sparklers.

They momentarily catch your eyes, but a day or so later, you hardly recall them.



Other glitter now grabs your attention.

Some folks hope for fame of any type.

They want to be noticed—now.

Tomorrow they’ll try to re-flame again.

Paul the Apostle wrote the Book of Romans.

Before he met Jesus, he, too, longed for recognition.

But once Paul knew Jesus, he glorified God.

He didn’t look to be remembered by influential people or powerful politicians.

Paul didn’t seek to be the center of attention.

After he met Jesus, Paul lived to honor God.

Whether Paul would be tweeting, emailing, texting, or blogging today, I can’t say.

But I can confidently tell you this.

Paul wrote artfully.

His superb letter urging slave owner Philemon to free his run-away-slave Onesimus stands as one of the best writings ever.

In appealing to the Philemon’s highest motives, Paul wrote briefly, thoughtfully, and persuasively.

The Apostle wrote a much lengthier letter to Christ’s church in Rome.

If Paul penned it on a scroll, that scroll would have been about nine feet long.

That’s a mite longer than some of those single spaced two page Christmas epistles some send.

That’s why we ask our animals write for us.

They aren’t as long-winded as preacher Bob.

If you’re curious about the length of other *NT* books, a *Revelation* scroll runs about 15’ and a *Matthew* scroll about 30’.

Paul wrote Romans about 57 AD—ten or eleven years before he died.

Paul addressed his letter to “all in Rome.”

We need to clarify an important point here.

The Rome church didn’t meet in one big edifice.

Ask the location of a church today and most people will direct you to a building.

Things were different in the first few centuries.

As we noted previously, the NT word *church* primarily referred to an assembly of people.

God’s church in Rome built no houses of worship.

At first, when Christians assembled to worship, they gathered in homes or rented halls.

The way Paul addressed various small groups in Romans 16 confirms that truth.

Many estimate that Rome’s first century population exceeded a million people.

Christian homes were likely spread across the city.

Even today it isn’t easy to locate buildings.

When we visited Rome a few years ago, our daughter Janice rented an apartment.

At the Rome airport, Janice gave the professional driver the building’s address (located in the old city).

The driver knew the city well.

His family lived not far from St. Peter’s Basilica.

His vehicle came equipped with GPS.

But a closed bridge over the Tiber River caused confusion in his GPS info.

Rome’s old streets were built for oxcarts and rarely have sidewalks.

Buildings directly abut the streets.

European-sized cars share the way with bicycles, motorbikes, pedestrians, and delivery trucks.



I sat in the front passenger seat.

One street was so narrow a small projection clipped the side view mirror beside me.

I doubt many rides at Disneyland, Disneyworld, Six Flags, or any amusement park could be more breathtaking than that ride.

Regarding the subject of worship buildings, it would have been nearly impossible for believers scattered all over the city to gather at one location in the vast, complex Roman metropolis.

The early church likely did not build worship structures because they emphasized two goals:

First, Jesus commissioned the church to preach Good news of repentance for the forgiveness of sins—He calls all people everywhere to repent.

Through His sacrificial death and powerful resurrection, anyone anywhere can lay hold of the eternal life Jesus made possible.

Second, the church took care of its widows and orphans.

They did not waste money on buildings, which virtually are human idols and monuments.

So the Apostle Paul wrote dedicated believers in Christ, who met in house-churches throughout Rome.

In this letter to the Romans, Paul faced a

daunting task.

Through God’s Spirit, Paul meant to alter individual hearts and minds.

He wanted to help them change their religious beliefs and overcome numerous prejudices.

Some folks try to modify our beliefs in order to gain control over us.

They resort to deception, trickery, and false claims in order to “sell us a bill of goods.”



The Lord wants us free of human control and bondage.

No human being can make good on all his/her promises.

Only God can really free us.

To enjoy the freedom He gives, however, we must remember fundamentals God consistently gave from the beginning.

Every discipline requires fundamentals—basics; basketball, football—every sport needs them.

Many modern day Christians don’t know God’s fundamentals exist.

Numerous Roman Christians lacked them.

God changed Paul’s life so positively that Paul wrote passionately about the Lord’s way.

He could hardly stop talking about God’s great fundamentals in Christ.

It didn’t matter where he was or with whom; Paul boldly wanted folks to know Christ.

We often falter because we forget God’s basics.

Scholars write about Paul’s long sentences.

I suspect his extended sentences indicate Paul’s great passion for Christ.

Once Paul started writing about the advantages that Christ gives us, his mind flooded with benefits.

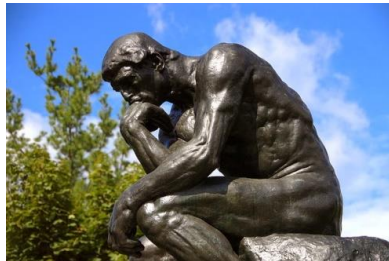
When a girl first meets the “perfect guy,” she hardly knows where to start and stop talking.¹

Each quality she states brings to mind a hundred others.

It’s not enough to say that he’s good looking.

She likes the way he smiles including that loveable dimple; his face has that neat look and his eyes are dreamy.

When she talks about him, her sentences naturally run together.



In the same way, Paul wrote eagerly about Jesus.

Before he met Christ, Paul acted angrily, with bigotry, and self-righteousness.

After he met Jesus, Paul gained a new attitude, new purpose, new hope, and new goals.

Why wouldn’t he want to say everything positive he could about Jesus?

Experiencing something so life-changing makes it difficult to stop talking.

Are you happy with the course of your life?

Only you can honestly answer that question.

When you think about your life today, do you feel in control or do you feel helpless?

Do you feel confident that God has taken care of you and put you in a secure place?

Or do you feel helpless and worried?

Paul described the transformation Christ brings and what happens to those who experience it.

Nearly every person should find joy with the effects of Christ’s transformation.

In talking about the change Christ brought him, Paul used the following term terms: **strength, endurance, patience, joy, and gratitude.**

We all want these things and we’d also like the people around us to share them.

¹ This applies equally to a guy meeting a perfect girl.

**Who wouldn’t vote for these?
I know people who would not vote for
any of presidential candidates.**

But I know only a few who wouldn’t like to have greater strength, endurance, patience, increased joy, and gratitude and for others folks to acquire them.

So what Christ basics-fundamentals do we tend to neglect?

Here briefly are a significant three.

**1. Jesus fulfilled all Old Testament prophecy.
In Luke 24:44, Jesus told the Twelve that he had to fulfill all of them.**

Have you recently read Matthew’s Gospel? Matthew listed many of them for his Jewish contemporaries, who knew the OT very well. The *Book of Revelation* lists scores of them in subtle symbolism that Christian readers could understand, but that confused unbelievers.

It makes an exciting, fascinating read.

2. Christians tend to forget Jesus’ resurrection power.

Let me share one personal example.

I vividly recall the night in 1966 that Norma’s nephew died. At the age of 18 months, the little

boy died of sudden crib syndrome that often occurred at the time.

Only a few months before, our children had been in Oregon playing with him. Earlier in the day, I took Norma to LAX; she flew north to be with her brother and his family in their loss.

The news agitated and unsettled our young sons. I went to the boys’ bedroom to talk with them and be with them, trying to console them and ease their fears. I told them what I believed and trust even more strongly now. Without question, their little cousin would go to heaven to be with God. I emphasized my confidence. Not long after, the boys became calmer and went to sleep.

**3. In our text Paul wrote of the
“obedience that comes from
faith.”**

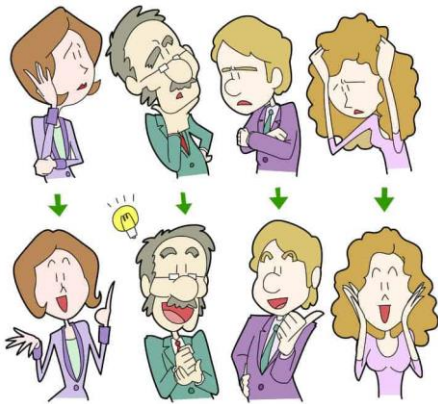
**Too many Christians try to get by on faith
without fully obeying God.**

**That disconnect leads to all kinds of
disruption and frustration, and it certainly
does not please God.**

People in our present time keep focusing on what they consider the misbehavior of others.



We don’t have to read far in Matthew’s Gospel to learn that Jesus taught us how to act when others misbehave (See Matthew 5).



We don’t judge and we don’t complain. Instead, we follow the fundamentals in the Beatitudes, which the Lord wants us to practice and do reps on every day.

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

“Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me.

Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

This is the first in a series on the *Book of Romans*, which, God willing, we shall feature in the coming weeks.

I’m thankful for ClipArt.

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