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THE PREACHING OF “THE GOSPEL OF GOD”: PAUL’S
MISSION TO THE NATIONS IN ROMANS

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To my beloved wife

Susanna Sircar

and

our dearly loved children,

Gracia Shobhana and Jonathan Shobhan,

gifts from God and sources of overwhelming joy

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AB	Anchor Bible
<i>ABD</i>	D. N. Freedman (ed.), <i>The Anchor Bible Dictionary</i>
<i>ABR</i>	<i>Australian Biblical Review</i>
AnBib	Analecta biblica
ANF	The Ante-Nicene Fathers, ed. A. Roberts and J. Donaldson (Buffalo: Christian Literature, 1885-96; reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975).
ANTC	Abingdon New Testament Commentaries
<i>APJ</i>	<i>American Journal of Philosophy</i>
<i>ATR</i>	<i>Anglican Theological Review</i>
<i>BBR</i>	<i>Bulletin for Biblical Research</i>
BDAG	W. Bauer, <i>A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Literature</i> , ed. and trans. William F. Arndt and F. Wilber Gingrich, 1979; 3 rd ed., rev. and ed. Frederick W. Danker, 2000.
BDB	F. Brown, S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs, <i>Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> , trans. E. Robinson.
BDF	F. Blass, A Debrunner, and R. W. Funk, <i>A Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> .
<i>BHS</i>	<i>Biblia hebraica stuttgartensia</i>
<i>Bib</i>	<i>Biblica</i>
BETL	Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologiarum lovaniensium
BECNT	Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
<i>BJRL</i>	<i>Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester</i>
BNTC	Black's New Testament Commentaries
<i>BR</i>	<i>Biblical Research</i>

<i>BSac</i>	<i>Bibliotheca Sacra</i>
BST	Bible Speaks Today
<i>BTB</i>	<i>Biblical Theology Bulletin</i>
<i>BZ</i>	<i>Biblische Zeitschrift</i>
BZNW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
<i>Chm</i>	<i>Churchman</i>
<i>DJG</i>	<i>Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels</i>
<i>DPL</i>	<i>Dictionary of Paul and His Letters</i>
EBC	Everyman's Bible Commentary
<i>EDNT</i>	H. Blaz and G. Schneider (eds.), <i>Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament</i> .
<i>ExAud</i>	<i>Ex Auditu</i>
<i>ExpTim</i>	<i>Expository Times</i>
<i>Exp</i>	<i>The Expositor</i>
<i>EvT</i>	<i>Evangelische Theologie</i>
<i>GCG</i>	<i>Global Church Growth</i>
GNT4	Greek New Testament, 4 th rev. edition
<i>HBT</i>	<i>Horizon in Biblical Theology</i>
HNTC	Harper's New Testament Commentaries
<i>HTR</i>	<i>Havard Theological Review</i>
ICC	International Critical Commentaries
<i>ISBE</i>	G. W. Bromiley (ed.), <i>The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia</i>
<i>Int</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
IVPNTC	The IVP New Testament Commentary Series
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JETS</i>	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
<i>JR</i>	<i>Journal of Religion</i>

<i>JSNT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
JSNTSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series
<i>JSS</i>	<i>Journal of Semitic Studies</i>
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
KEK	Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament
LSJ	H. G. Liddell and R. Scott (eds.), <i>Greek-English Lexicon</i> , rev. H. S. Jones
Moffatt	The New Testament: A New Translation by James Moffatt
MM	J. H. Moulton and G. Milligan, <i>The Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament: Illustrated from the Papyri and Other Non-literary Sources</i>
MNTC	Moffatt New Testament Commentary
NAC	The New American Commentary
NCBC	New Century Biblical Commentary
NIBC	New International Biblical Commentary
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
<i>NIDNTT</i>	L. Coenen, E. Beyreuther, and H. Bietenhard (eds.), <i>The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology</i> , trans. and ed. C. Brown.
<i>NorTT</i>	<i>Norsk Teologisk Tidsskrift</i>
<i>NovT</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
NovTSup	Supplements to Novum Testamentum
NPNF	A Selected Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, ed. Phillip Schaff, et al. (New York: Christian Literature, 1887-94; reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975.
NSBT	New Studies on Biblical Theology
NTC	New Testament Commentaries
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
NTSup	New Testament Supplement Series
PNTC	The Pillar New Testament Commentary
1QH	<i>Hôdāyôt (Thanksgiving Hymns)</i> from Qumran Cave 1
1QS	<i>Serek hayyahad (Rule of the Community, Manual of Discipline)</i>

1QSa	Appendix A (<i>Rule of the Congregation</i>) to 1QS
4QFlor	<i>Florilegium</i> (or <i>Eschatological Midrashim</i>) from Qumran Cave 4
RB	<i>Revue biblique</i>
RevExp	<i>Review & Expositor</i>
RQ	<i>Restoration Quarterly</i>
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBT	Studies in Biblical Theology
SE	<i>Studia Evangelica</i>
SEA	<i>Svensk Exegetisk Årsbok</i>
SJT	<i>Scottish Journal of Theology</i>
SNT	Studien zum Neuen Testament
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
TynBul	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>
TDNT	G. Kittel and G. Friedrich (eds.), <i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i> , trans. and ed. G. W. Bromiley.
TDOT	G. J. Botterweck, H. Ringgren, and H. –J. Fabry (eds.), <i>Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament</i> , trans. J. T. Willis, G. W. Bromiley
TNTC	Tyndale New Testament Commentaries
TJ	<i>Trinity Journal</i>
Th	<i>Theology</i>
TPINTC	TPI New Testament Commentaries
TS	<i>Theological Studies</i>
TToday	<i>Theology Today</i>
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WTJ	<i>Westminster Theological Journal</i>
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
ZNW	<i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>

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PREFACE

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The letter to the Romans continues to remain the focus of much scholarly debate and intense study. In regard to its purpose and central message, for instance, there are numerous proposals, and no consensus is reached among the scholars. One cannot ignore the fact, though, that Paul begins and concludes his letter to the Romans with the theme of the gospel, which he explicates in the body of the letter addressed to both the Jews and the “nations.”¹ This very gospel is necessary to preach for their salvation without any distinction. Thus, it seems that the preaching of the gospel to all nations of the world (inclusive of all peoples, i.e., both the Jews and the nations) is Paul’s foundational and central motif of his mission “theo-logy”² in Romans.

¹Paul frequently uses the Greek term ἔθνη (*ethnē*; Hebrew, *gōyim*), which has most often been translated with the uppercase as “Gentile,” as opposed to Jews (Rom 2:14; 3:29-30; etc.), and at other times as “nation(s)” of the world outside the people of Israel (the Jewish nation, cf. Rom 1:5; 4:17; 4:18; 10:19; 16:26; possibly Rom 2:24; 15:9b-12; etc.). However, the term is not a proper name referring to a particular ethnic/people group, unlike “Jew” or “Greek.” The Jews/Israelites used this term referring to the non-Jewish people of the world. Therefore, Paul’s use of the term ἔθνη often means “nations.” This view is recently defended by James M. Scott, who claimed that the OT tradition of the table of nations in Gen 10 influenced Jewish and Pauline usage of ἔθνη (*Paul and the Nations: The Old Testament and Jewish Background of Paul’s Mission to the Nations with special reference to the Destination of Galatians*, WUNT 84 [Tübingen: Mohr, 1995], 57-134). Consequently, in this work, the term “nation(s)” will be used to refer to the Greek term ἔθνη/ἔθνος, except when the use of the term “gentile” seems appropriate, but always in a lowercase, except in a direct quotation. For the same reason, Andrew Das (and N. Elliott and others) used lowercase for the term “gentile,” instead of the uppercase normally used. See A. Andrew Das, *Solving the Romans Debate* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 1 n.2.

²The term “theology” has a wide range of meanings and is always used in the general sense, which can mean “the doctrinal formulation of religious beliefs.” Hence, in the study of New Testament theology, it deals with the general content of the New Testament books, not only with their doctrine of God. The term “theo-logy” is used “in the strict sense of the word,” that is, for “the doctrine of God.” See N. A. Dahl, “The Neglected Factor in New Testament Theology,” in *Jesus the Christ: The Historical Origins of Christological Doctrine*, ed. Donald H. Juel (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 153. This paper was first presented to the faculty conference at the Yale University Divinity School in 1975 and subsequently

When one reads the opening verses (1:1-17) of Paul's letter to the Romans, the reader will encounter some of the significant ideas that are also repeated in the letter's closing and explicated in the body of the letter. For example: (1) Paul's gospel, for which he was separated to preach; (2) his separation to preach the gospel to the nations; (3) Paul's strong emphasis on the continuous involvement of God in the gospel he proclaimed, exemplified clearly by phrases like "the gospel of God," which "He promised beforehand," through "His prophets in the holy scriptures," the gospel concerning "His Son"; and (4) his preaching of the "gospel of God" to the nations that has been fulfilled in the incarnate, crucified, and risen Christ. In these introductory verses, as well as in the letter's closing and additionally at various points in the body of Romans, Paul demonstrates his strong emphasis on the preaching of the gospel, which is inclusive of all nations. Paul links the gospel and its preaching to the nations with basic statements about God's character and actions to show that God is the central focus of his message and mission as well. Furthermore, he shows that both the gospel and its preaching to the nations are the fulfillment of God's promise made long before in Scripture.³ As Paul makes it clear from the opening of the letter, as our cursory reading of the passages referred to here (and coupled with other references) will show, the theme of the "gospel" and its preaching to the nations and scriptural fulfillment of God's promise connect the epistle's opening, body, and closing. Thus, Moo points out that the main body of Romans is a treatise on Paul's gospel, bracketed by an epistolary opening (1:1-

printed in Yale Divinity School's *Reflection* 73 (1975): 5-8.

³E.g., see Rom 1:1-17; 3:27-31; 10:1-21; 11:13; 15:1-13; 15:14-33; 16:25-27.

17) and conclusion (15:14-16:27).⁴

This research project is, therefore, a development of these concepts, which aims to show that Paul had a missionary purpose behind the writing of the epistle to the Romans and his mission was proclaiming the “gospel of God” to all the nations of the world, which was central to his mission. Hence, this explains the reason for taking up this research under the title, “The Preaching of ‘the Gospel of God’: Paul’s Mission to the Nations in Romans.”

The Statement of the Problem

One of the main reasons that Paul writes the epistle is his mission to the nations. By “mission” here is meant the gospel proclamation, specifically, in Paul’s language, “the gospel of God,” for which he is set apart. It is this mission that makes Paul confident about his calling as an “apostle to the gentiles,” which is primarily concerned with this gospel and its proclamation “among all the nations” (ἐν πᾶσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν, Rom 1:5),⁵ that is, among all people, people groups, or nations of the world.⁶ The use of the adjective “all” is significant in connection with his commission for preaching the gospel to all nations of the world. He not only considers that his commission to go to the

⁴Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT, vol. 42 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 39. Also, G. Klein (“Paul’s Purpose in Writing the Epistle to the Romans,” in *The Romans Debate*, rev. ed., ed. K. P. Donfried [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991], 35) notes, “But it is exactly the theme of the gospel and Paul’s responsibility for carrying it out in Rome which connect the letter’s opening, body, and closing.”

⁵Here the term is ἔθνεσιν rightly translated as “nations” (AV, NKJV, ASV, RSV, NJB, NEB, ESV), instead of “Gentiles” (NAB, NASV, NIV, NLT, and, surprisingly, NRSV).

⁶E.g., see C. E. B. Cranfield, who contended that Paul uses “gentile” to refer to a geographical location (*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans: Introduction and Commentary on Romans I-VIII* [Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1975], 1:20).

“nations” of the world echoes the Old Testament commission of the prophets. Even his message of the gospel and its preaching to the nations, though, confirm the fulfillment of the promises made in the Old Testament. For instance, 4:17 (from Gen 17:3), 10:19 (from Deut 32:21), and numerous other passages support this motif.

However, the letter, for a long time, had been considered as mainly a dogmatic or doctrinal document. The topic of “mission” in the letter as a whole has not attracted much attention, or perhaps received only a passing remark in a few commentaries and monographs. This issue raises a couple of questions. First, “what factors are there that make us conclude that Paul had a missionary purpose in writing Romans?” Secondly, “if this conclusion is right, then what is Paul’s mission in Romans, and how does he understand and appropriate his mission?” Thirdly, “what is the gospel that Paul preached, for which he was set apart, and what is his main message? What are the methods or principles he employed to ensure the success of his mission?” Fourthly, “how does Paul’s claim that he is ‘the Apostle to the gentiles’ influence his own understanding of his mission to the nations?” And, “how does Paul’s understanding of his mission affect his view of the Jews and the gentiles, along with the relationship between them?”

When Paul’s mission is viewed in light of his vocation, his mission was to preach the gospel concerning Jesus Christ, which God promised in the Scripture, a gospel which Paul understands to be inclusive of all nations (1:5, 16; 16:25-26). Yet it is exclusive because the gospel is the power of God for salvation to *everyone who believes* (1:16; 6:23; 8:1; 10:9-10, 13). Right in the beginning, he clearly says, “Paul, . . . called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which he [God] promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures” (vv. 1-2). This, in fact, calls for another

question: “What is the role and place of God in Paul’s mission theology in general and the letter to the Romans in particular?” Indeed, his missionary activity in the preaching of the gospel to the nations can scarcely be understood apart from a basic belief that the gospel is the promise and the work of the one true God, who created all things. Finally, what aspect of Paul’s mission must our contemporary church claim or reclaim to make her mission more effective, challenging, and relevant in the midst of the endless-changing situations of today’s world? These are some of the leading questions that will help discover the theology behind Paul’s mission to the nations in Romans.

Background

Paul starts and ends his letter to the Romans with the theme of the gospel. Its explication in the body of the letter gives reason to think that preaching the gospel is Paul’s foundational and central motif in his vision for worldwide mission. He was set apart, like the prophets in the Old Testament, for the gospel (1:1; see also Gal 1:15; cf. Jer 1:5), and his being set apart for the gospel signifies God’s action for this special task as well. As “the apostle to the Gentiles” (11:13; cf. Eph 3:1-13 and Col 1:24-2:3), Paul devotes most of his missionary activities to proclaiming the gospel. The gospel, however, for him is “the gospel of God” (1:1; 15:16),⁷ implying that the gospel is *God’s good news* that proclaims the saving message *about God* and *from God*, because all these ideas are included in Paul’s understanding.

On the one hand, the “gospel of God” pertains to “His [God’s] Son,” which is

⁷See also in 1 Thess 2:2, 8, 9; 2 Cor 11:7; 1 Tim 1:11; cf. Mark 1:14; 1 Pet 4:17. In Romans, Paul also refers to the gospel as “the gospel of Christ” (15:19; see also 1 Thess 3:2; 1 Cor 9:12; 2 Cor 2:12; 9:13; 10:14; Gal 1:7; Phil 1:27); or “the gospel of his Son” (1:9; cf. 1:3); or “the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation” (1:16; cf. Eph 1:13), implying the content or the message of the gospel.

Paul's central message and the fulfillment of the prophetic promises of God made in the Scripture about His Son. Consequently, for him, God is the one who speaks in and through the Scripture. Paul finds the gospel promised in Scripture because he sees God's enacted faithfulness in Christ. On the other hand, Paul employs the term God, the language about God, and His actions fulfilled in Christ in the context of preaching the gospel, which not only reveals Paul's "theo-logy," but also displays the priority of God in Christ in his mission to the nations. These gentile nations believe in the existence of some kind of god(s), but they lack the right notion or the knowledge of the One true God (1:21-25; cf. 2 Cor 4:4; 1Thess 1:9-10). This may have resulted in theological controversies between the Jews and the non-Jews. Paul's discussion of God, which is the common point of contact, might have served the purpose of uniting them together, as Moxnes points out.⁸

Paul, in fact, is at a crucial point in his missionary activity when he purposed to write this very truth in a letter to the Roman Christians. Paul is finishing his mission in the East (15:19) and is preparing to bring the collection from the gentile churches for the poor in the Jerusalem church (15:25-26). Moreover, Paul is hoping that after his Jerusalem trip, he would pass Rome on his way to Spain for his new mission (15:24, 28), which would have a further bearing on his mission to the nations. Paul has not just one, but many, reasons for writing to the Romans. One such reason is that Paul wants to tell them that he has long desired to visit them but, for a lack of time, he has not been able to realize it until then (see 1:13; 15:22). Being a stranger to them because he did not

⁸Halvor Moxnes, *Theology in Conflict: Studies in Paul's Understanding of God in Romans* (Leiden: Brill, 1980), 78-99.

establish the church, Paul wants to introduce not only himself as an apostle, but to advance the gospel that he is called to preach specifically to all nations (cf. 1:1-5; 10:9-21; 15:7-13; 16:25-27) as well. Likewise, as an “apostle to the gentiles” (11:13), Paul feels that the Roman Christians are within the scope of his commission, so he thinks he has the responsibility to address some of the concerns within the community. One such concern would have been the Jewish-gentile relationship.

When Paul is referring to the “gentiles,” he is not only referring to the Christian gentiles (1:6), as most scholars agree, but also to the non-Christian gentiles (see his reference to 1:13, “among the rest of the gentiles,” or his calling to preach the gospel in areas where it had not yet been preached [15:20]). And, in view of his mission to the West, Paul probably wants to gain favor with them, so that they could lend support to his upcoming missionary activities in Spain (see 15:24, 28). In fact, there is a clear emphasis on Paul’s vocation to the nations in all three parts of the letter (1:5; 11:13; 15:16-18). This implies that Paul regarded Spain, including Rome, (“among the rest of the gentiles” in verse 13), as the place that he could fulfill his calling as the “apostle to the gentiles” precisely due to the fact that they were gentile territories.

History of Research

The Problem of the Purpose of Romans

It is pointed out above that the letter to the Romans, until Baur, is regarded as mainly a dogmatic or doctrinal document.⁹ In fact, since then, scholars have hotly

⁹See F. C. Baur, *Paul the Apostle of Jesus Christ: His Life and Works, His Epistles and Teachings; A Contribution to a Critical History of Primitive Christianity*, 2 vols. in one, 1849 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003), 322-23. According to Baur, “[T]he origin and aim of the Epistle is considered from a purely dogmatic point of view, without inquiring exactly into the historical cause of the Epistle and the relations it bore to the Roman Church, and therefore attention is especially directed to it, as though the Apostle only intended to give a comprehensive and connected representation of the whole of his doctrinal

debated the matter of Paul's purpose in writing the letter without a consensus in view.¹⁰ For example, Baur thinks Romans must have originated, like all of Paul's other letters, due to a specific issue in the church, and that hence it must be understood from a historical point of view, rather than a dogmatic one.¹¹ Barth, though, calls for a 'theological exegesis,' as opposed to a 'historical exegesis,'¹² and Nygren calls for a doctrinal writing, a theological treatise.¹³ Beker concludes that Romans is a summary of the essence of Paul's thought.¹⁴ Bornkamm terms it Paul's "last will and testament." He considers Romans as Paul's theological reflection in the light of an anticipated debate at Jerusalem,¹⁵ while Manson believes that Romans reflects a manifesto of Paul's theology.¹⁶ However appealing these suggestions may be, in short, they do not adequately explicate Romans' objective.

ideas, so to speak, a compendium of Pauline dogma in the form of an apostolic letter." See also J. B. Lightfoot, *Biblical Essays* (New York: Macmillan, 1893; reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), 315; W. G. T. Shedd, *Commentary on Romans*, 1879 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), viii: "The object of the writer was to give to the Roman congregation, and ultimately to Christendom, a complete statement of religious truth."

¹⁰For a survey concerning the purpose of Romans, see Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; Leicester: IVP, 1988), 7-18; L. Ann Jervis, *The Purpose of Romans: A Comparative Letter Structure Investigation*, JSNTSup 55 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991); John W. Drane, "Why Did Paul Write Romans?" in *Pauline Studies: Essays Presented to Professor F. F. Bruce on His 70th Birthday*, ed. Donald A. Hagner and Murray J. Harris (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 209-13; Thomas Schreiner, *Romans*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), 15-23. For a more recent survey, see Das, *Solving the Romans Debate*, 36-76.

¹¹Baur, *Paul the Apostle*, 323-24.

¹²Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans* (London: Oxford University Press, 1933), 8.

¹³Anders Nygren, *Commentary on Romans* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1949), 7.

¹⁴J. C. Beker, *Paul the Apostle: The Triumph of God in Life and Thought* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), 59.

¹⁵G. Bornkamm, "The Letter to the Romans as Paul's Last Will and Testament," in *The Romans Debate*, rev. ed., ed. K. P. Donfried (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), 27-28. Bornkamm summarizes it this way, "This great document, which summarizes and develops the most important themes and thoughts of the Pauline message and theology and which elevates his theology above the moment of definite situations and conflicts into the sphere of the eternally and universally valid, this letter to the Romans is the last will and testament of the Apostle Paul."

¹⁶T. W. Manson, "St. Paul's Letters to the Romans and Others," in *The Romans Debate*, rev.

Still others think its purpose is different. For instance, Klein considers that the Roman church lacks a genuine ‘apostolic foundation’ (based on 15:20), and Paul thus aims to give his ‘authentic apostolic stamp’ to the church in Rome.¹⁷ Most of those who think that he writes with the needs of the Roman church in mind do so according to the implications of 14:1-15:13 because the issue of the strong and the weak is in view in his discussion. Therefore, Karris considers the issue of the ‘weak’ (the Jewish Christians) and the ‘strong’ (the gentile Christians) as giving an occasion for Paul to write to the Roman church for admonishing the two factions to live at peace.¹⁸ Watson finds tensions between Jews and gentiles, which gave reason for Paul to write this letter for resolving the conflict between the two opposing parties in Rome.¹⁹ By noting the major part of the body of the letter (Rom 1-11), David Aune argues that Paul’s focus is on the gospel and its meaning, instead of on the Romans and their immediate needs.²⁰ The complete omission of any direct reference to the Romans until 11:13 makes it very difficult to think that the problems of the Roman church are foremost in Paul’s mind. Much in this section

ed., ed. K. P. Donfried (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), 3-15.

¹⁷Klein, “Paul’s Purpose in Writing the Epistle to the Romans,” 29-43.

¹⁸R. J. Karris, “Romans 14:1-15:13 and the Occasion of Romans,” in *The Romans Debate*, rev. ed., ed. K. P. Donfried (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), 65-84.

¹⁹Francis Watson, “The Two Roman Congregations: Romans 14:1-15:13,” in *The Romans Debate*, rev. ed., ed. K. P. Donfried (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), 203-15. The majority of scholars now subscribe to this position that Paul wrote with the goal of maintaining the unity between Jews and gentiles. E.g., W. S. Campbell, “Why Did Paul Write Romans,” *ExpTim* 85 (1973-74): 264-69; P. S. Minear, *The Obedience of Faith: The Purposes of Paul in the Epistle to the Romans*, SBT 19 (Naperville, IL: Allenson, 1971), 8-15, which identifies five different groups; A. J. M. Wedderburn, *The Reasons for Romans: Studies in the New Testament and Its World*, ed. John Riches (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1988), 44-65; K. P. Donfried, “False Presuppositions in the Study of Romans,” in *The Romans Debate*, rev. ed., ed. K. P. Donfried (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), 102-24; Peter Stuhlmacher, “The Purpose of Romans,” in *The Romans Debate*, ed., ed. K. P. Donfried (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), 231-42.

²⁰David. E. Aune, “Romans as a Logos Protreptikos in the Context of Ancient Religious and Philosophical Propaganda,” in *Paulus als Missionar und Theologe und das antike Judentum*, ed. Martin Hengel and U. Heckel (Tübingen: Mohr, 1991), 91-121. For an abbreviated version of this article, see David. E. Aune, “Roman as a Logos Protreptikos,” in *The Romans Debate*, rev. ed., ed. K. P. Donfried (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), 278-96.

does not relate to the situation implied in the fourteenth and fifteenth chapters. It is also not fair to contend that Romans must be directed only to the needs of the congregation like Paul's other letters. These reasons that make Paul write to the Romans certainly cannot be totally ignored. There is, however, one single purpose behind all these reasons to write a letter to the Romans: the missionary purpose that provides a more significant contributing factor for him to write this long letter to a church he did not plant. In this letter, Paul most clearly focuses on his vocation, that is, his missionary self-understanding of being an apostle to and for the nations (gentiles). It is evidently pointing to his vision for worldwide mission.

Much has been written about various themes in the Pauline letters—and Romans, in particular—which are considered central to Paul's theology and have become the center of debate among the scholars as well. For example, “justification by faith,” “the righteousness of God,” “Christology,” “eschatology,” “ecclesiology,” “soteriology,” “reconciliation,” etc., all have received significant attention. The subject of mission in the letter has just rarely been taken into account by the exegetes, though, while others have outlined the topic only.²¹ As a result, it is no surprise that there is a scarcity of studies conducted about the specific topic of mission theology in this letter as a whole.²² Consequently, this study is an attempt to contribute to the study of Paul's understanding

²¹E.g., Walter B. Russell III, “An Alternative Suggestion for the Purpose of Romans,” *BSac* 145 (1988): 174-84; Minear, *The Obedience of Faith*, 91-110; N. A. Dahl, “The Missionary Theology in the Epistle to the Romans,” in *Studies in Paul: Theology for the Early Christian Mission* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1977), 70-94; L. Grant McClung, “An Urban Cross-Cultural Role Model: Paul's Self-Image in Romans,” *GCG* 26 (1989): 5-8.

²²Arland J. Hultgren, *Paul's Gospel and Mission: The Outlook from His Letter to the Romans* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985). For a discussion about a specific mission concept or passage (s) from Romans, see Peter T. O'Brien, *Gospel and Mission in the Writings of Paul: An Exegetical and Theological Analysis* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995), 27-81; David G. Peterson, “Maturity: The Goal of Mission,” in *The Gospel to the Nations: Perspectives on Paul's Mission*, ed. Peter Bolt and Mark Thompson (Leicester: Apollos; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 185-204.

of mission to the nations, which—as this author maintains—is the heart of his theology in the letter to the Romans.

Mission to the Jews, or Gentile Christians, or Gentiles (Nations)?

Is Paul writing to the Jews only or to the gentiles also? Which group constitutes the majority among his audience? Is his mission directed to the Jews or to the gentiles? Citing Ambrosiaster's tradition, Thomas Schreiner points out that the Roman community is composed of both Jews and gentiles.²³ Scholars have been debating whether the letter that Paul penned was directed mainly to the Jews or to the gentiles. A majority identifies the audience that he addressed in his mission as being essentially gentiles.²⁴ Even the recent monographs have come up with a similar conclusion.²⁵ Others disagree with this assessment.²⁶ Still others find gentiles as the major emphasis of Paul's mission, yet—at the end—admit that the whole epistle presupposes a Jewish majority.²⁷ Today, however, this view is almost universally rejected.

²³Schreiner, *Romans*, 12. See also his subsequent argument in favor of gentile as the majority in the Roman church (12-15).

²⁴For a survey about this issue, see Steve Mason, "‘For I Am Not Ashamed of the Gospel’ (Rom 1:16): The Gospel and the First Readers of Romans," in *Gospel in Paul: Studies on Corinthians, Galatians and Romans for Richard Longenecker*, ed. L. Ann Jervis and Peter Richardson (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1994), 254-87. Also, cf. K. P. Donfried, ed., *The Romans Debate*, rev. ed. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991). Of the 23 studies, only Watson ("The Two Roman Congregations," 203-15) proposes a Jewish majority. The commentators for the gentile majority are: Matthew Black, *Romans*, NCBC (London: Oliphants, 1973), 23; Ernest Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, trans. G. W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 15; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 33.

²⁵L. Gaston, *Paul and the Torah* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia, 1987), 22-23, 116; Jervis, *The Purpose of Romans*, 77, 103-04. However, Andrew Das, in his recent monograph, *Solving the Romans Debate*, made a strong case for an exclusive gentile audience.

²⁶Baur, *Paul the Apostle*, 338; Watson, "The Two Roman Congregations," 254-87; Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 1: 20-21. Cranfield denied that 1:6, 13-15, and 15:15-16 imply a gentile readership.

²⁷J. A. T. Robinson, *Wrestling with Romans* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1979), 7; W. G. Kümmel, *Introduction to the New Testament*, trans. H. C. Kee (Nashville: Abingdon, 1975), 309.

In the opening of the letter (1:5-6), Paul addresses his commission to the gentiles; in the body (at 11:13), he confirms his call as “the apostle to the gentiles;” and in the closing (at 15:15-16), Paul justifies his boldness in his calling as a “minister of Jesus Christ to the gentiles.” In addition, he demonstrates that his gospel, which he is called to proclaim, is the fulfillment of what is promised long before in the Scripture.²⁸ Consequently, Paul underscores the role of the Scriptures in his gospel from the very opening of the letter (1:2), to its closing (16:26), and throughout the body of the letter numerous times. In Romans, he refers to the non-Jews 34 times (gentiles/nations 27 times, Greeks six times and barbarians once), in comparison with sixteen references to Jews. Although these statistics may not conclusively decide the case concerning the identity of the letter’s recipients or toward whom Paul’s mission is directed, they may at least indicate the priority of his mission.²⁹ All the references to nations and other related passages in Romans need to be studied in detail, though, to rightly understand Paul’s implied mission to the nations of the world as it is promised in the Old Testament.

‘Mission’ to the Nations as Paul’s Purpose in Romans

It has become increasingly clear to NT scholars in recent years that Paul’s objective in Romans cannot be confined to any of the suggestions discussed above. Romans has many purposes, as numerous interpreters have suggested.³⁰ No doubt, while

²⁸Rom 4:17 from Gen 17:5; Rom 10:19 from Deut 32:21; Rom 14:11 from Isa 45:23b; Rom 15:9b-12 from Ps 18:49; Deut 32:43; Ps 117:1; Isa 11:10.

²⁹For a different viewpoint, see Mason, “For I Am Not Ashamed of the Gospel,” 256-77. He concluded that these references to gentiles “(a) *cannot* take methodological priority over the orientation of the letter as a whole and (b) *can* plausibly be understood in ways that do not involve a Gentile audience,” 287.

³⁰E.g., F. F. Bruce, “The Romans Debate—Continued,” in *The Romans Debate*, rev. ed., ed. K.

Paul may have had a number of reasons to write his letter as mentioned above, there must have been one common purpose behind writing to the Roman Christians.

According to Moo, Paul's "missionary situation" shares a common denominator with the various purposes of Romans.³¹ For example, though solving the Jewish-gentile conflict may not have been the purpose of his writing, one cannot ignore the fact that Paul's letter apparently arrived at the Roman church at a time when anti-Semitism was intense in the Roman Empire.³² Perhaps Paul would have attended to the issue because he believes the declaration of the mystery of Jewish-gentile unity in the body of Christ to be an essential part of his apostolic mission and message,³³ which is his gospel (Rom 1:8-16; 16:25-26; cf. Eph 3:1-13; Col 1:24-27). This mystery is now manifested "that was kept secret for long ages but has now been disclosed and through the Scriptures of the prophets has been made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith" (Rom 1:5; 16:25b-26; cf. 15:18).

His gospel states that "there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord is Lord of *all*" (10:12). For this reason, Paul—in his apostleship—is eager to involve the Roman Christians as his partners and to involve them as a united body,"³⁴ in

P. Donfried (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), 175-94; Wedderburn, *The Reasons for Romans* (thus his title suggests); Mark Seifrid, *Justification by Faith: The Origin and Development of a Pauline Theme*, NTSup 68 (Leiden: Brill, 1992), 182-210; Jervis, *The Purpose of Romans*, 158-63.

³¹Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 20; cf. also Seifrid, *Justification by Faith*, 182-210.

³²See Wolfgang Wiefel, "The Jewish Community in Ancient Rome and the Origins of Roman Christianity," in *The Romans Debate*, rev. ed., ed. K. P. Donfried (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), 85-101.

³³Russell, "An Alternative Suggestion for the Purpose of Romans," 181.

³⁴Bruce, "The Romans Debate—Continued," 193.

his mission to the nations. This Jewish-gentile unity and cooperation in the Roman church have a greater missiological purpose in Paul's "theo-logy," which would result in God's name being revealed and glorified among all the nations of the world (15:7-13).³⁵ Paul wants to associate with his global mission a whole community like the members of the Roman church for their outstanding faith, known throughout the whole world (1:8), and spiritual maturity (15:14). Thus, for Krister Stendahl, Romans pertains to "God's plan for the world and how Paul's mission to the gentiles fits into this plan."³⁶ Similarly, Franz Leenhardt finds the occasion in Paul's preparation for his missionary work in Spain.³⁷ In fact, Leander Keck describes that, without the projected mission to Spain, there is no reason to think that Romans would have been written at all.³⁸ This is emphasized in a recent commentary on Romans by Robert Jewett.³⁹ It is indicated above that there is a clear emphasis on Paul's vocation to gentiles in all three sections of the letter (letter opening 1:5, body 11:13, and letter closing 15:16-18). Therefore, it is implied that Paul considers Spain as the place in which he could fulfill his calling precisely because it is gentile territory.⁴⁰

³⁵For the global missionary purpose of Romans, see Helmut Koester, *History and Literature of Early Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982), 2:142. For a similar view, see Bornkamm, "The Letter to the Romans as Paul's Last Will and Testament," 16-28.

³⁶Krister Stendahl, *Paul among Jews and Gentiles and Other Essays* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976), 42.

³⁷Franz J. Leenhardt, *The Epistle to the Romans* (London: Clark, 1961), 15.

³⁸Leander E. Keck, "What Makes Romans Tick?" in *Pauline Theology*, vol. 3, *Romans*, ed. David M. Hay and Elizabeth Johnson (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 22.

³⁹Robert Jewett, *Romans: A Commentary*. Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 80-91.

⁴⁰W. P. Bowers, "Jewish Communities in Spain in the Time of Paul the Apostle," *JTS* 26 (1975): 400. Bowers, who has made a comparative survey of all the available evidence, concludes that "a major Jewish presence in Spain" emerged only in the third century, and that its roots revert to the decades between the two Jewish revolts in Palestine. According to Bowers, "That there were Jewish communities in

Paul has concluded his work in the East, where he has fully proclaimed the gospel from Jerusalem to Illyrica (15:19), and he has also established some degree of unity in these regions. Then, Paul turns to the West, via the Roman Church, to fulfill the same by proclaiming the same gospel and thereby to reach the nations. He additionally wants to resolve conflicts and disunity among Jews and gentiles to garner their support for his further mission to the nations. Consequently, a clear vision for world mission is anticipated in Paul's mind. Recently David Aune maintains, "Paul's main purpose in writing Romans was to present the gospel he proclaimed (1:15) as a means of introducing himself and his mission to the Roman Christians because he intended to pay them a visit (1:10-15; 15:22-29), and use Rome as staging for a mission to Spain (15:24, 28)."⁴¹

Paul's mission here is the proclamation of 'the gospel of God' to the nations, which is the common element both in the opening and closing, and is explicated in the body of the letter. This gospel is the good news from *God* concerning *His* Son, who was promised long ago in the Scriptures through *His* prophets, but now fulfilled in *His* incarnate, crucified, and risen Son, Jesus Christ, to bring about *His* eternal plan of salvation for all people. This is the gospel for which God calls Paul to preach for bringing about "the obedience of faith among all the nations." These scriptural facts clearly show

Spain prior to this is not supported by any evidence currently available."

⁴¹David E. Aune, *The New Testament in Its Literary Environment* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1987), 219. There are many representatives of this view, e.g., A. Wilkenhauser, *New Testament Introduction* (Freiburg: Herder, 1958), 407; O. Cullmann, *The New Testament: An Introduction for the General Readers*, trans. J. Bowden (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1966), 701; B. N. Kaye, "'To the Romans and Others' Revisited," *NovT* 18 (1976): 37, 42; Robinson, *Wrestling with Romans*, 8; C. E. B. Cranfield, *Romans: A Shorter Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), xiii; Robert Jewett, "Romans as an Ambassadorial Letter," *Int* 36 (1982): 5-20. Käsemann (*Commentary on Romans*, 404) calls Romans Paul's "'theological report' intended to introduce himself and win his readers over to his gospel so that they will help him both with his westward mission and act as 'rearguard protection in relation to Jerusalem.'"

that the mission originated with God. He is the author of the mission, who planned it and fulfilled it in His Son, Jesus Christ. Hence, in regard to the missionary purpose of the letter, one cannot ignore the question about God and the theological issues raised by the very nature of His revelation concerning His eternal plan of salvation for all nations and its fulfillment in the incarnate, crucified, and risen Christ. In fact, Paul's numerous statements about God in Romans—especially His natures and actions, His eternal plan, and fulfillment of all His promises in His Son, Jesus Christ—explain the true identity of this God. It is, indeed, this identity of God that provides the basis for understanding Paul's mission to the nations. In other words, Paul's "theo-logy" and his missionary activity must be studied together for a proper understanding of Romans.⁴²

It seems that the discussion of God is not a favorable subject matter in the study of New Testament theology, though, as N. A. Dahl once laments in his essay, "The Neglected Factor in New Testament Theology."⁴³ Perhaps, to some extent, this has been fulfilled regarding the study of Pauline theology as a whole,⁴⁴ specifically in light of the renewed interest in recent years about the quest for God, which numerous articles, essays, and monographs reveal.⁴⁵ Many Pauline scholars lately have been showing increased

⁴²In particular, see Dahl, "The Missionary Theology in the Epistle to the Romans," 70-94. See also Hultgren, *Paul's Gospel and Mission*; W. S. Campbell, *Paul's Gospel in an Intercultural Context* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1992), 81-97.

⁴³Dahl, "The Neglected Factor in New Testament Theology," 153-63. For a similar view, see Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 20.

⁴⁴Before Dahl's article, only a handful of works can be traced about the discussion of God in Paul: C. H. Giblin, *In Hope of God's Glory: Pauline Theological Perspectives* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1970); David M. Coffey, "Natural Knowledge of God: Reflections on Romans 1:18-32," *TS* 31 (1970): 674-91; S. Lewis Johnson Jr., "Paul and the Knowledge of God," *BSac* 62 (1972): 61-74. However, A. C. Wire's dissertation on the topic, "Pauline Theology as an Understanding of God: The Explicit and the Implicit" (Ph.D. diss., School of Theology at Claremont, 1974), is a significant step toward the discussion of the statements about God in Pauline theology.

⁴⁵C. H. Giblin, "Three Monotheistic Texts in Paul," *CBQ* 37 (1975): 527-47; E. F. Osborn, "The Unity of God in Paul's Thought," *ABR* 28 (1980): 40-57; J. M. Bassler, *Divine Impartiality: Paul and*

interest in language about God in Romans.⁴⁶ Among them, the monograph of Halvor Moxnes remains a significant work on this issue concerning Romans.⁴⁷ In the broader perspective of his mission, however, Paul's basic belief pertaining to God is the foundation of his mission to the nations, which is of fundamental significance as far as his letter to the Romans is concerned. To put it briefly, Paul's mission theology may be characterized as a God-centered theology of mission with a framework of biblical promise and fulfillment. One cannot ignore the fact that Paul makes this evidence the starting point for his mission to the nations, which focuses on God (see Chapter 3 for details). Paul asserts that God is not the God of the Jews only, but He is also the God of

a Theological Axiom, SBLDS 59 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1981); Robert Jenson, *The Triune Identity: God according to the Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982); Leon Morris, "The Apostle Paul and His God," in *God Who Is Rich in Mercy: Essays Presented to Dr. D. B. Knox*, ed. P. T. O'Brien and D. G. Peterson (Homebush, Australia: Anzea Publishers, 1986), 165-78; N. Richardson, *Paul's Language about God*, JSNTSup 99 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994); U. Mauser, "One God and Trinitarian Language in the Letters of Paul," *HBT* 20 (1998): 99-108; J. D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 27-50; P. J. Gräbe, *The Power of God in Paul's Letters*, WUNT 2/123 (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 2000); Francis Watson, "The Triune Divine Identity: Reflections on Pauline God-Language, in Disagreement with J. D. G. Dunn," *JSNT* 80 (2000): 99-124; Thomas Schreiner, *Paul: Apostle of God's Glory in Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001); A. Andrew Das and F. J. Matera, eds., *The Forgotten God: Perspectives in Biblical Theology; Essays in Honor of Paul J. Achtemeier on the Occasion of His Seventy-Fifth Birthday* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002); J. Plevnik, "The Understanding of God at the Basis of Pauline Theology," *CBQ* 65 (2003): 554-67; Calvert Koyzis, *Paul, Monotheism, and the People of God: The Significance of Abraham Traditions for Early Judaism and Christianity*, JSNTSup 273 (London/New York: T & T Clark, 2004); Mark A. Seifrid, "The Knowledge of the Creator and the Experience of Exile: The Contours of Paul's Theology" (paper presented at the SNTS Seminar on "Inhalte und Probleme einer neutestamentlichen Theologie," Martin Luther Universität, Halle, Wittenberg, 2-7 August 2005).

⁴⁶Leon Morris, "The Theme of Romans," in *Apostolic History and the Gospel: Biblical and Historical Essays Presented to F. F. Bruce on His 60th Birthday*, ed. W. W. Gasque and R. P. Martin (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), 249-63; Terence L. Donaldson, "God," in *Paul and the Gentiles: Remapping the Apostle's Convictional World* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997), 81-106; M. M. Thompson, "'Mercy upon All': God as the Father in the Epistle to the Romans," in *Romans and the People of God: Essays in Honor of Gordon D. Fee on the Occasion of His 65th Birthday*, ed. S. K. Soderlund and N. T. Wright (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 203-16; R. B. Hays, "The God of Mercy Who Rescues Us from the Present Evil Age: Romans and Galatians," in *The Forgotten God: Perspectives in Biblical Theology; Essays in Honor of Paul J. Achtemeier on the Occasion of His Seventy-Fifth Birthday*, ed. A. Andrew Das and F. J. Matera (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 123-43.

⁴⁷Moxnes, *Theology in Conflict: Studies in Paul's Understanding of God in Romans*.

the gentiles, because God is one (3:29-30). Paul's very assertion about the nature of God makes his mission inclusive of all the nations of the world. Indeed, his mission is preaching the 'gospel of God,' which implies that the gospel is preaching of the saving message *about God*. In addition, it is preaching the saving message *from God* concerning His incarnate, crucified, and risen Son, Jesus Christ. Paul is separated for this very task: to proclaim the saving message of the gospel to all the nations of the world.

The question is how one can proceed with this whole issue of Paul's purpose in writing such an important letter. The response to this inquiry lies in "the epistolary frame" of Romans, which provides a crucial key for answering the difficult and much debated question of why Paul writes this epistle.⁴⁸ Klyne Snodgrass rightly observes that gospel and mission are implicit throughout the letter, but these two subjects are explicit primarily in the epistolary frame (1:1-17 and 15:14-16:27).⁴⁹ The epistolary framework establishes the authority of Paul's apostleship and of his gospel over the gentiles in Romans. Paul presents his gospel in a way to win their acceptance as he "preached" (expounded) it in the body of the letter. He believes himself to be both divinely obligated and uniquely qualified to share this gospel with the Romans. He is convinced that this would result not only in the strengthening of their faith, but in reaching others who are outside the faith—that is, all the nations of the world. Every other proposed reason for writing of Romans, therefore, must be integrated into his primary concern "to preach the

⁴⁸See Jeffrey A. D. Weima, "Preaching the Gospel in Rome: A Study of the Epistolary Framework of Romans," in *Gospel in Paul: Studies on Corinthians, Galatians, and Romans for Richard Longenecker*, ed. L. Ann Jervis and Peter Richardson (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 337-66.

⁴⁹Klyne Snodgrass, "The Gospel in Romans: A Theology of Revelation," in *Gospel in Paul: Studies on Corinthians, Galatians, and Romans for Richard Longenecker*, ed. L. Ann Jervis and Peter Richardson (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 289.

gospel also to you who are in Rome” (1:15).⁵⁰ Paul wants to preach the gospel to all people without exception. He does not accept any barrier of culture and race (Greeks and Barbarians, 1:14), or of education and social status (wise and unwise, 1:14), and thus wants to come to Rome. Romans 1:1-15 is not just a redundant introduction, but tells the actual purpose of Romans, proving that the mission to the nations is God’s own plan spoken long before in the Old Testament. Consequently, one can identify the same frame of thought at the end of Chapter 15. In Chapters 14 and 15, Paul switches directly from a list of OT quotations, which prove that all gentiles are in God’s plan of hearing the gospel that he repeats in the introduction. This is even more impressive when the entire conclusion is compared to the introduction (see Table 1). This epistolary framework of Romans, which explains the occasion and purpose of the whole letter, states the theme, the purpose, and identity of the audiences of the letter in its first and last verses—namely, the “preaching of the gospel as his mission to the nations.” The following summary of the epistolary frame offers the basic understanding of Paul’s theology of mission in a nutshell:

1. The epistolary framework outlines Paul’s missionary purpose.
2. His mission is preaching the gospel of God.
3. The gospel concerns God’s Son, Jesus Christ.
4. Paul is called to preach to the nations and bring about their obedience of faith to the gospel.
5. Both the gospel and its preaching to the nations are God’s promises, which are foretold in the OT.
6. Jesus Christ fulfilled both these promises and Paul’s desire is preaching to all the nations.

⁵⁰Weima, “Preaching the Gospel in Rome,” 366. See also Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 20.

Table 1: The epistolary framework of Romans

The letter opening	Parallel themes	The letter closing
1:1, 9, 15	The theme of the gospel (cf. 1:16; 2:16; 10:16; 11:28)	15:16, 19, 25
1:2	The gospel was promised in the OT	16:25-27
1:3, 9	The gospel is preaching Jesus Christ	16:25
1:5	The obedience of faith must be preached among all nations	16:26
1:8	The faith of the Christians in Rome is known to all	16:19
1:8-13	Paul's travel plans: from Jerusalem to Rome	15:22-29
1:11-12	Paul desires to be strengthened spiritually by the Christians in Rome	15:24 (15:14)
1:13-15	The gospel must be preached to all nations	15:14-29 (16:26)
1:7	The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ	16:20b
1:13	Paul's hindrance in coming to Rome	15:22

Reasons for, and Significance of, the Study

According to a recent survey of the resources on “mission,” a renewed interest is observed among scholars regarding the understanding of ‘mission’ from biblical, theological, socio-cultural, economic, and religious perspectives. The Christian mission, however, is not a new invention or trend. It was God’s plan from the very beginning. It was first promised to Abraham; advanced through his generations; emphasized and confirmed it in the law, writings, and the prophets; and received its momentum and fulfillment in the birth of the Messiah Jesus. He gathered His disciples, and the church was born. He commanded them to go into all the nations, and a new beginning usurped the history of the mission of the church of Jesus Christ.

There has been no lack of interest in the study of the complex reality of mission in the Bible and the church since that time. Throughout the history of

Christianity, the church of Jesus Christ has experienced challenges, both from inside and from outside, regarding its own understanding and nature of the mission. Our contemporary world situation has drastically changed and become increasingly diverse and more complex. In fact, the challenge now is much greater than it ever was before. On the one hand, there is the development of science and technology; on the other hand are the growing secularization and globalization processes. These have opened the world of opportunities for people from different religious and cultural backgrounds to migrate to the West and other parts of the world. These factors have resulted in religious and cultural pluralism. Simultaneously, there are increased anti-Christian propaganda and sidelining of any Christian elements from the Western world, which was once the hub of Christianity. Moreover, Christian moral values are steadily declining. These are just some of the realities of the present world that challenge Christian churches and their understanding of mission.

This is certainly an opportunity for churches of today to re-evaluate and rethink their own understanding of mission toward more relevant and effective witnessing and service to the world. One means of challenging present churches for mission is reapplying the biblical and “theo-logical” roots that are fashioned after the beginnings of the mission in the early Christian church. It is in this context that Paul’s mission “theo-logy” in his epistle to the Romans has been selected for study. This will help us to appreciate the impact and significant contribution Paul made in the success of the mission to the unreached nations of the world through the church of Jesus Christ. Furthermore, it will provide us with a scriptural and theological basis of mission that will truly respond to the current needs of the church and missions in relationship to the world.

This study ultimately aims to show (1) that the church and Christian missions have a specific mission—which is “the proclamation of the gospel” to all nations of the world—besides other responsibilities, such as worshiping, teaching, nurturing, caring, etc.; (2) that the identity of God in His saving action for the world offers the foundation for Paul’s mission; (3) that Paul’s understanding of mission based on Scripture (OT) furnishes the right understanding of God for preaching the gospel in the present context, in which the true identity of God has been distorted; and (4) that Paul’s mission finds its fulfillment in His (God’s) Son, Jesus Christ—the only true identity of God—who was promised in the Scripture, and through whom ‘all nations’ will have the true knowledge of God and receive salvation.

Method and Scope

The epistolary framework plays a crucial role in establishing the proclamation of God’s gospel as Paul’s mission to the nations. Its fulfillment in Scripture provides the connecting thread between the opening and closing, and the body of the letter. This study will require a careful and comparative examination of the opening, closing, and selected texts of the body of the letter by employing the theological and exegetical method. The examination will include the disciplines of textual, grammatical analysis; semantic analysis; and background analysis. Although this study may make reference to other Pauline texts as its points of support, the project will be limited to Paul’s letter to the Romans. The following texts have been carefully chosen for the purpose stated above. Romans 1:1-17 and 15:14-16:27 are selected for obvious reason, because they point to the epistolary frame of the letter, which shows Paul’s missionary purpose. The identity of God has been delineated as occupying the central theme of Romans, and hence Paul’s

identification of God offers the theological basis of his mission. His identification of God with God's work in Christ, or in terms of people/nations, or who He is in Himself are underscored in Romans in numerous statements about God. These statements about God and similarly his mission as preaching the gospel of God to all the nations appear to be remarkably significant in the following selected texts: 1:1-7; 1:18-31; 2:1-16; 3:21-30; 4:1-30; 5:1-11; 8:1-34; 9:30-10:21; 11:11-36; 15:1-13; 15:14-16:27.

Summary

The entire project consists of five chapters, which include an introduction and a conclusion. The first chapter introduces the dissertation topic; explains the importance of the research; and follows them with a statement of the problems and the history of research. Chapter 1 contains as well aims, objectives, and method of the study, and outlines the ways in which this study will be undertaken to its completion.

Chapter 2 sets the stage for the main body of the research. It opens by exploring the epistolary frame of the letter, and maintaining that Paul basically had a missionary purpose in mind when he was writing the letter to the Romans. He was first and foremost a missionary. Some may find different purposes of the letter; nevertheless, the missionary purpose functions as a common denominator for the various other purposes of Romans. The epistolary framework offers the evidence for the argument.

Chapter 3 examines the identity of God in Paul's mission. For him, God is the foundation and the starting point of his mission. The chapter not only investigates his emphasis on God's nature, but also explores the major role God played in relation to Christ and the nations in the context of his preaching the gospel. This chapter will show a God who acts in history, and how His actions make Him entirely different from the

god(s) of the gentiles. It will demonstrate that Paul's mission for preaching the gospel to the gentiles effectively fits into God's purpose for the world.

Chapter 4 will investigate Paul's mission in the context of his missionary function. He was called and commissioned to preach the gospel. Specifically, his call was to be an apostle, as he was set apart for "the gospel of God." The apostle sets forth this gospel in this magnificent letter. The authority of the gospel lies with God, who owns it and originated it. The preaching of the gospel pertains to God's Son—a promise God made in the Old Testament—which is fulfilled in the incarnate, crucified, and risen Christ. In addition, this chapter also examines the identity of Paul's audiences toward whom his mission was directed. It is evident that Paul's calling and commission were to be a missionary to the gentiles. This calling was an integral part of God's redemptive plan, which was marked by promise of blessing for the nations that God made long before in the Old Testament. Paul's calling and commission to the nations find their fulfillment in the Scripture.

Finally, based on the findings of these chapters, a conclusion will be drawn to uncover Paul's theology of mission to the nations of the world. These insights will be applied to the present situation of the church's mission practice.

CHAPTER 2

THE PURPOSE OF ROMANS: THE EVIDENCE OF MISSION FROM AN EPISTOLARY FRAMEWORK

Introduction

One of the basic problems with which all interpreters of Romans have been wrestling is Paul's purpose for writing the letter. Is Paul offering a compendium of Christian doctrine or a summary of his thought? Or, Is he expecting support for his missionary work in Spain? Or, the Roman church is deficient in a proper apostolic foundation. Is he anticipating opposition to his gospel in Rome, which forces him to write this letter? Chapter 1 surveys numerous proposals that the interpreters of Romans have suggested. It is not easy to choose among the various alternatives that have been suggested, nor can one of the alternatives be fully agreed upon. In his book, *Prolegomena*—published in 1895—F. J. A. Hort remarks, “That the problem [of the original purpose of Romans] is not very simple may be reasonably inferred from the extraordinary variety of opinion which has prevailed and still prevails about it.”¹

Thus, even more than a century after Hort's remark, the problem of the purpose of Romans today lacks a consensual opinion. This is confirmed even in recent essays and monographs.² One reason for the diverse opinions may be neglect of the study of the

¹F. J. A. Hort, *Prolegomena to St. Paul's Epistles to the Romans and the Ephesians* (London: Macmillan, 1895), 5.

²See K. P. Donfried, ed., *The Romans Debate*, rev. ed. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991); A. J. M. Wedderburn, *The Reasons for Romans* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1988), 1; L. Ann Jervis, *The*

actual letter structure of the Pauline letters in general and of Romans, in particular. For proper interpretation and a better understanding of any Pauline letter, one needs to study the letter's epistolary frame.³ Though Pauline scholars have been quite slow to recognize the need for such a study, some recent scholars in the field demonstrates that clues from the epistolary framework of a letter offer strong evidence for an author's occasion and the purpose for writing a specific letter.⁴ In the following, this chapter demonstrates the justification for this approach with brief historical development, and a comprehensive and detailed study of the epistolary framework of Romans. The chapter explains its hermeneutical value, which provides evidence for the occasion and purpose of the letter. It shows that Paul, in fact, had not only the immediate concern—that is, preaching the gospel in Rome—but the global missionary concern in mind as well when he wrote the letter to the Romans.

Justification of the Approach

The assumption is that Paul's purpose lies almost exclusively on the content or the body of the letter. This assumption is true because the study of the form and structure of Pauline letters "has not outgrown the experimental stage," laments Paul Schubert,⁵

Purpose of Romans: A Comparative Letter Structure Investigation, JSNTSup 55 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1991), 14.

³See R. W. Funk, "The Form and Function of the Pauline Letter," in *SBL Seminar Papers* (Missoula, MT: Scholars, 1970), 8.

⁴Jervis, *The Purpose of Romans*; J. A. D. Weima, "Preaching the Gospel in Rome: A Study of the Epistolary Framework of Romans," in *Gospel in Paul: Studies on Corinthians, Galatians, and Romans for Richard Longenecker*, JSNTSup 108, ed. L. Ann Jervis and Peter Richardson (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 337-66; Robert Jewett, "Ecumenical Theology for the Sake of Mission: Romans 1:1-17+15:14-16:24," in *Pauline Theology*, vol. 3, *Romans*, ed. David M. Hay and Elizabeth Johnson (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 89-108; James C. Miller, *The Obedience of Faith, the Eschatological People of God, and the Purpose of Romans*, SBL Dissertation Series 177 (Atlanta: SBL, 2000).

⁵Paul Schubert, "Form and Function of the Pauline Letters," *JR* 19 (1939): 368.

even until the first few decades of the twentieth century. He further attributes this neglect to the influence of one basic assumption about the Pauline letters throughout the history of biblical scholarship:

There is basically very little difference of bias or objective between the work of Marcion, Augustine, Luther, F. C. Baur, Pfleiderer, Wrede, Schweitzer, Karl Barth, Lohmeyer, and Loisy. They all share the basic but unwarranted assumption that Paul was essentially or primarily a theologian; that his system of theology was a marvel of logical consistency. A correlate of this assumption is that a study of the form of the Pauline letters is a waste of time, as far as the understanding of these letters is concerned.⁶

This assumption becomes virtually true when one deals with Paul's letter to the Romans. Dealing with Romans, J. C. Beker indeed correctly captures both the fascination and the neglect of this approach: "The presupposition that Romans is a 'theological confession' or 'dogmatics in outline' is the real reason for the immense interest in the letter's architectonic structure and the neglect of its 'frame.'"⁷ The disregard for the epistolary framework of the letter's opening and closing may additionally be ascribed to the two main assumptions: (1) that the epistolary frame functions mainly to establish or maintain contact; and (2) that there is a widespread interest in the body sections of the letter because they contain a more significant topic of concern. John L. White confirms these assumptions in the following:

Whereas the body conveys the specific, situational occasion of the letter, the opening and closing tend to convey the ongoing and general, aspect of correspondents' relationship. Whereas the opening and closing enhance the maintenance of contact, the 'keeping-in-touch' function of the letter writing, the body expresses the specific reason(s) for writing.⁸

⁶Ibid., 374.

⁷J. C. Beker, *Paul the Apostle: The Triumph of God in Life and Thought* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 62. See also J. A. D. Weima, *Neglected Endings: The Significance of the Pauline Letter Closings*, JSNTSup 101 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 11.

⁸John L. White, "The Ancient Epistolography Group Retrospect," *Semeia* 22 (1981): 7. See

Therefore, Walter B. Russell III contends, “Most interpreters of Romans virtually ignored the introductory and closing purpose statements and focused on the doctrinal and theological exposition of the letter's body.”⁹ Body alone, however, is not enough for describing authorial intention. While an author may have a primary concern with the body content, its functional intention—such as, introduction, exhortation, encouragement, admonition, etc.—establishes the way the content is to be communicated. Consequently, the importance of the study of a letter structure is not only recognized, but also illustrated in recent commentaries and essays.¹⁰

A Brief Historical Development of Letter Structure

The critical study of Pauline letters, though, was slowly taking its starting point from an analysis of the formal epistolary structures of the Greco-Roman world when Paul's letters were written.¹¹ This becomes evident, especially after the discovery of thousands of papyrus documents in Egypt in the early twentieth century.¹² According to White, Adolf Deissmann¹³ “initiated a study of Paul's letters qua letters.”¹⁴ His

also his monograph, *The Body of the Greek Letter* (Missoula, MT: Scholars, 1972), 63.

⁹Walter B. Russell III, “An Alternative Suggestion for the Purpose of Romans,” *BSac* 145 (1988): 175.

¹⁰R. N. Longenecker, *Galatians* (Dallas: Word Books, 1990), ci.

¹¹For a detailed survey of this material, see Schubert, “Form and Function of the Pauline Letters,” 365-77; Jervis, *The Purpose of Romans*, 36-41; Weima, *Neglected Endings*, 12-27.

¹²These papyrus documents are dated from the second century BC to the second century AD. For more detailed accounts, see E. G. Turner, *Greek Papyri: An Introduction* (Princeton: University Press, 1968), 17-41. See also John L. White, *Light from Ancient Letters* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986).

¹³A. Deissmann, *Bible Studies* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1901); idem, *Light from the Ancient East: The New Testament Illustrated by Recently Discovered Texts of the Greco-Roman World*, rev. ed., trans. L. R. M. Strachan (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1927).

¹⁴John L. White, “Saint Paul and the Apostolic Letter Tradition,” *CBQ* 45 (1983): 435. See

conclusion was negative and radical, however, that led him to say that Paul's letters were haphazardly written and not systematically presented, and thus he was not a writer of epistles, or a literary man.¹⁵ Indeed, his negative evaluation of Pauline letters immediately raised critical voices of warning and protest. In fact, closer investigation of the Egyptian papyrus letters and the Pauline letters shows much similarity in certain formal aspects: For example, letter opening and letter closing formulas and many transitional phrases find numerous parallels between them. Even comparative studies with other ancient nonliterary letters illustrate that Paul's letters demonstrate a formal structure. After this initial setback, some significant progress is observed during the first half of the twentieth century in understanding the form and function of the Greco-Roman letters, along with the Pauline letters.¹⁶

About the same time, several important works, both in German and English, highlight the significance of the study of the epistolary conventions of the ancient letters. Among these, the German epistolographer Heikki Koskeniemi's work, *Studien zur Idee und Phraseologie des griechischen Briefes bis 400n. Chr.*—published in 1956—is significant.¹⁷ His work contributes to the proper understanding of the characteristic

also Schubert, "Form and Function of the Pauline Letters," 368.

¹⁵Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East*, 240-41.

¹⁶F. X. J. Exler, *The Form of the Ancient Greek Letter: A Study in Greek Epistolography* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America, 1923); O. Roller, *Das Formular den Paulinischen Briefe* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1933); C. W. Welles, *Royal Correspondence in the Hellenistic Period* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1934); L. D. Champion, *Benedictions and Doxologies in the Epistles of Paul* (Oxford: Kemp Hall, 1934); C. W. Keyes, "The Greek Letter of Introduction," *AJP* 56 (1935): 28-44; Paul Schubert, *Form and Function of the Pauline Thanksgiving* (Berlin: Topelmann, 1939); J. A. Eschlemann, "La rédaction des Epîtres pauliniennes," *RB* 63 (1946): 185-96.

¹⁷Cited by Weima, *Neglected Endings*, 13. Koskeniemi identified three main characteristic functions of a Greco-Roman letter: (1) it serves as a means of expressing a friendly relationship (φιλοφροσύνη); (2) it functions as a substitute for the author's presence (παρουσία); and (3) it continues a dialogic conversation in writing (δμιλία) (*Studien zur Idee und Phraseologie*, 34-47).

functions of an ancient letter. As a result of his innovative work, the later epistolographers underline a twofold purpose of a letter: One is maintaining personal contact, while the other is conveying information. They associate these purposes with the epistolary structure of the opening and closing conventions of an ancient letter because “they serve the same broad epistolary function, the communication of Paul’s disposition in writing.”¹⁸ Following the work of Koskenniemi, a flurry of studies has been conducted on the form and function, types, and categories of the ancient Greek and Hellenistic letters.¹⁹ These studies influence the Pauline epistolographers. Hence, after the first half of the twentieth century, numerous monographs, essays, and articles have contributed to the different nuances of forms and structures of the Pauline letters in general.²⁰ In recent

¹⁸White, “Saint Paul and the Apostolic Letter Tradition,” 437.

¹⁹W. G. Doty, “The Epistle in Late Hellenism and Early Christianity: Developments, Influences, and Literary Form” (Ph.D. diss., Drew University, 1966); K. Thraede, *Grundzüge griechisch-römischer Brieftopik* (Munich: Beck, 1970); White, *The Body of the Greek Letter*; idem, *The Form and Structure of the Official Petition* (Missoula, MT: Scholars, 1972); John L. White and Keith A. Kensinger, “Categories of Greek Papyrus Letters,” in *SBL Seminar Papers* (Missoula, MT: Scholars, 1976), 79-91; S. K. Stowers, *Letter Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986). For more recent work on various ancient epistolary communication among Jewish, Greek, Roman and Christianity, see Hans-Josef Klauck, *Ancient Letters and the New Testament: A Guide to Context and Exegesis* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2006), 1-298.

²⁰J. T. Sanders, “The Transition from Opening Epistolary Thanksgiving to Body in the Letters of the Pauline Corpus,” *JBL* 81 (1962): 348-62; D. G. Bradley, “The Topos as a Form in the Pauline Paraneis,” *JBL* 81 (1962): 384-56; T. Y. Mullins, “Petition as a Literary Form,” *NovT* 5 (1962): 46-54; idem, “Disclosure: A Literary Form in the New Testament,” *NovT* 7 (1964): 44-50; R. W. Funk, *Language, Hermeneutics, and the Word of God* (New York: Harper, 1966); idem, “The Apostolic Parousia: Form and Significance,” in *Christian History and Interpretation: Studies Presented to John Knox*, ed. R. W. Funk (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 249-68; G. J. Bahr, “The Subscriptions in the Pauline Letters,” *JBL* 87 (1968): 27-41; T. Y. Mullins, “Greeting as a New Testament Form,” *JBL* 87 (1968): 418-26; R. Jewett, “The Form and Function of the Homiletic Benediction,” *ATR* 51 (1969): 18-34; J. L. White, “Introductory Formulae in the Body of the Pauline Letter,” *JBL* 90 (1971): 91-97; idem, *The Body of the Greek Letter*; T. Y. Mullins, “Formulas in New Testament Epistles,” *JBL* 91 (1972): 380-90; C. Kim, *Form and Structure of the Familiar Greek Letter of Recommendation* (Missoula, MT: Scholars, 1972); W. G. Doty, *Letters in Primitive Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1973); T. Y. Mullins, “Ascription as a Literary Form,” *NTS* 19 (1973): 194-205; idem, “Visit Talk in New Testament,” *CBQ* 35 (1973): 350-58; P. T. O’Brien, “Thanksgiving and the Gospel in Paul,” *NTS* 21 (1974-75): 144-55; White, “Saint Paul and the Apostolic Letter Tradition,” 433-44; S. N. Olson, “Epistolary Uses of Expressions of Self-Confidence,” *JBL* 103 (1984): 585-97; Weima, *Neglected Endings*; Klauck, *Ancient Letters and the New Testament*, 300-34.

years, though, there have been a number of studies on the analysis of the formal epistolary structure of Paul's individual letters.²¹ These efforts are of great importance for the present study because they either paid close attention to the varied details of the letter opening or the letter closing, or neglected the one at the cost of the other, especially the letter closing.²² The epistolary frame of Romans—that is, both the letter opening and closing—which explains the occasion and purpose of the entire letter, has been ignored at the cost of the body of the letter.

Of late, however, only a few significant works have been published regarding the analysis of the epistolary conventions of Romans.²³ One, using the comparative letter structure analysis, concludes that the purpose of Romans is “to fulfill Paul’s mandate to establish and nurture his Roman readers in a life of faith marked by obedience and holiness—to *preach the gospel* to them.”²⁴ The other work utilizing the epistolary framework determines that, besides many issues at work, “Paul’s overriding concern is *to preach the gospel* to the Roman Christians All other proposed purposes for the

²¹Robert Jewett, “The Epistolary Thanksgiving and the Integrity of Philippians,” *NovT* 21 (1970): 40-53; John L. White, “The Structural Analysis of Philemon: A Point of Departure in the Formal Analysis of the Pauline Letter,” *SBL Seminar Papers* (Missoula, MT: Scholars, 1971), 1: 1-47; H. D. Betz, “The Literary Composition and Function of Paul’s Letter to the Galatians,” *NTS* 21 (1974-75): 353-79; H. Boers, “The Form-Critical Study of Paul’s Letters: 1 Thessalonians a Case Study,” *NTS* 22 (1975-76): 140-58; Ronald Russell, “Pauline Letter Structure in Philippians,” *JETS* 25 (1982): 295-306. For non-Pauline NT epistles, see F. O. Francis, “Form and Function of the Opening and Closing Paragraphs of James and 1 John,” *ZNW* 61 (1970): 110-26. For each individual NT letters, see Klauck, *Ancient Letters and the New Testament*, 300-434.

²²See Weima, *Neglected Endings* (as its title suggests).

²³Jervis, *The Purpose of Romans*; Weima, “Preaching the Gospel in Rome,” 337-66; idem, “The Reason for Romans: The Evidence of Its Epistolary Framework (1:1-15; 15:14-16:27),” *RevExp* 100 (2003): 17-32; Jewett, “Ecumenical Theology for the Sake of Mission,” 89-108; Miller, *The Obedience of Faith*.

²⁴Jervis, *The Purpose of Romans*, 164; emphasis added.

writing of Romans, therefore, must be integrated into Paul's overriding concern 'to preach the gospel also to you who are in Rome' (1:15)."²⁵ What is the common purpose of these two works? It is 'to preach the gospel to the Roman Christians.' Is Paul's dominant intention to preach the gospel? There is no doubt about it. Preaching to only the Roman Christians, however, is a narrow and one-sided conclusion. For example, Paul does not mention his intent to preach in Rome in the letter closing. Then can this be the overriding purpose of Romans? In fact, Paul himself writes, "I hope to see you in passing as I go to Spain, and to be helped on my journey there by you, once I have enjoyed your company for a while" (15:24).

Such a central focus of his preaching the gospel among the Roman Christian community is emphasized as well in James Miller's work. "Paul's purpose involves forming a "community of new age."²⁶ This can be achieved by promoting unity among the Roman Christians, both Jews and gentiles, and to bring about the obedience of faith that plays the central role in shaping the community.²⁷ Miller additionally insists that the letter must have one single objective, although his work suggests otherwise. Scholars like Bruce, Cranfield, Wedderburn, Seifrid, Fitzmyer, Moo, and others have made strong cases for multiple purposes for writing.²⁸ Even though Jewett correctly delineates that

²⁵Weima, "Preaching the Gospel in Rome," 366; emphasis added.

²⁶Miller, *The Obedience of Faith*, 176.

²⁷Ibid., 178.

²⁸F. F. Bruce, "The Romans Debate –Continued," in *The Romans Debate*, rev. ed., ed. K. P. Donfried (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), 174-94; Wedderburn, *The Reasons for Romans* (thus his title suggests); Mark Seifrid, *Justification by Faith: The Origin and Development of a Central Theme*, NTSup 68 (Leiden: Brill, 1992), 182-210; Jervis, *The Purpose of Romans*, 158-63; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 2008), 80; Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 20.

mission is the letter's dominant purpose of the interpretation of Romans, he has, however, singled out the Spanish mission as the central goal of the letter.²⁹ He fairly downplayed Paul's mission to the nations/global mission concern. This conclusion, perhaps, is influenced by the denial of the integrity of the letter, and the authenticity of Romans 16, in which he has dismissed 16:17-20a and 16:25-27 as interpolations.³⁰

Indeed, the proposed objectives of the letter cannot be ignored because Paul is writing to the Roman Christians. His eye, conversely, is focusing beyond Rome. The focus of his mission is preaching the gospel not only to Rome, but to "all the nations" as well. In fact, Paul's dominant purpose for writing the letter to the Roman believers is *preaching the gospel to all the nations* of the world geographically, including Rome and Spain, as well as among ethnic people groups. For this reason, his focus is on worldwide mission. The following purpose statement for Romans is proposed: Paul's missionary purpose for Romans is preparing and challenging the Roman churches through his letter to assist him in preaching the gospel of God to all the nations of the world, and bringing about obedience of all peoples—both Jews and gentiles—to God through faith in Jesus Christ, according to God's eternal plan of salvation as foretold in the Scripture. Hence, this chapter seeks to show this missionary purpose and validate it from its epistolary frame. Consequently, if the interpreters of Paul could clearly present this global missionary purpose of Romans, then it is easier for modern readers to be able to grasp his other intentions that have been expressed in the letter.

²⁹Jewett, "Ecumenical Theology for the Sake of Mission," 89-92. In the preface to his commentary on Romans (Robert Jewett, *Romans: A Commentary*, Hermeneia [Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007], xv), Jewett emphatically has stated, "Romans as intended to elicit support for a mission to the 'barbarians' in Spain . . ." See also 87-91.

³⁰*Ibid.*, 92.

The Integrity of Romans

From the standpoint of the worldwide mission, the epistolary frame of Romans is quite significant. To speak of the epistolary framework as evidence for the global missionary purpose of Romans one must accept the Romans text in its current form, which is the full sixteen-chapter version of Romans as the original text.³¹ The epistolary framework, however, including the letter in its entirety is faced with serious debate among numerous scholars. They have questioned the integrity and unity of Romans on the grounds of internal inconsistencies, interpolations, and textual variations. Though the detailed discussion of this debate is beyond the scope of this research, it is imperative to briefly discuss these issues and the letter's defense for integrity and unity.³²

Some scholars ascertain internal inconsistencies and interpolations within the letter, which they, therefore, attribute to the multiple composition of the letter. In other words, the present letter is actually a composition of two,³³ three,³⁴ or even more separate

³¹It seems that Gamble's influential work on this issue has been quite decisive for the subsequent scholarship. See Harry Gamble Jr., *The Textual History of the Letter to the Romans: A Study in Textual and Literary Criticism*, Studies and Documents 42 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 57-95.

³²For a detailed survey with respect to this debate and a systematic defense for the integrity of Romans, see Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; Leicester: IVP, 1988), 21-31; Wedderburn, *The Reasons for Romans*, 11-21, 25-29; Seifrid, *Justification by Faith*, 249-54; Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 5-9; Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1998), 5-10; Andrew Das, *Solving the Romans Debate* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 10-23.

³³This was maintained by Walter Schmithals: the first letter is Romans A—which is composed of 1:1-4:25; 5:12-11:36; and 15:8-13—and written from Ephesus; and the second is Romans B, which is written after some time also from the same place and is composed of 12:1-21; 13:8-10; 14:1-15:4a, 7, 5-6, 14-32; 16:21-23; and 15:33. This view was first published in his monograph, *Der Römerbrief als historisches Problem*, SNT 9 (Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1975), 180-211, and reemphasized in his Romans commentary, *Der Römerbrief: Ein Kommentar* (Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1988), 25-29. For a critique, see Hans Hübner, *Law in Paul's Thought* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1984), 65-69; Wedderburn, *The Reasons for Romans*, 25-29.

³⁴See Junji Kinoshita, "Romans: Two Writings Combined: A New Interpretation of the Body of Romans," *NovT* 7 (1964): 258-77. He identifies (1) chapters. 1; 2:6-16; 3:21-26; 5:1-11; 8; 12; 13; 15:14-33 as the original letter (that is, a sermon on the gentile mission); (2) chapters. 2:1-5; 2:17-3:20; 3:27-4:5; 5:12-7:25; 9:1-11:36; 14:1-15:3; 15:4-13 as 'the manual of instruction' on Jewish problems; and

letters,³⁵ and the later redactors weaved them together into the present form. It seems that these theories do not have any scriptural or textual evidences. Consequently, they obtain little or no support at all among the scholars.³⁶ “Such theories,” Richard Hays remarks, “belong in a museum of exegetical curiosities rather than a serious discussion of the theological coherence of Romans. These hypotheses demonstrate nothing more than the inability of their authors to tolerate dialectical complexity.”³⁷ This sort of analysis of Romans lacks any concrete evidence in the ancient manuscripts and could not present any acceptable reason for the existence of such theories.

Additional serious questions are raised, nevertheless, by the presence of a large number of textual variations of Romans. These involve only the last two chapters. Jewett points out that the text critics have discovered fifteen different textual forms of Romans.³⁸ The following table shows a summary of the various forms of textual tradition.³⁹

(3) chapter 16 as the letter of Phoebe’s commendation.

³⁵J. C. O’Neill, in his commentary—*Paul’s Letter to the Romans* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1975), 13-18, 264-74—consistently maintains a theory of interpolation and identified several separate letters to search for consistency in the letter. For a similar view about the theory of interpolation, see Robert Martyr Hawkins, *The Rediscovery of the Historical Paul* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1943), chapter 4. For a critique, see N. M. Watson, “Simplifying the Righteousness of God: A Critique of J. C. O’Neill’s *Romans*,” *SJT* 30 (1977): 464-69.

³⁶See Leander E. Keck, “What Makes Romans Tick?” in *Pauline Theology*, vol. 3, *Romans*, ed. David M. Hay and Elizabeth Johnson (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 6-16. Keck, who has shown a sympathetic attitude toward these theories, has suggested taking them into account.

³⁷Richard B. Hays, “Adam, Israel, Christ: The Question of Covenant in the Theology of Romans: A Response to Leander E. Keck and N. T. Wright,” in *Pauline Theology*, vol. 3, *Romans*, ed. David M. Hay and Elizabeth Johnson (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 76.

³⁸Jewett, *Romans*, 4.

³⁹See Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 6. For a detailed listing of the manuscript evidence for the various forms, see Gamble, *The Textual History of the Letter to the Romans*, 23-24. See Jewett, *Romans*, 10-12.

Table 2: List of manuscript tradition of Romans

Sl. No.	Text Reference	Manuscript Tradition
1	1:1-14:23; 15:1-16:23; 16:25-27	P ⁶¹ ?, \aleph , B, C, D, 81, 1739, etc.
2	1:1-14:23; 16:25-27; 15:1-16:23; 16:25-27	A, P, 5, 33, 104
3	1:1-14:23; 15:1-16:24; 16:25-27	Ψ , the ‘majority’ text, sy ^h
4	1:1-14:23; 15:1-16:24	F, G, [archetype of D?], 629
5	1:1-14:23; 16:24-27	vg ^{1648, 1792, 2089}
6	1:1-15:33; 16:25-27; 16:1-23	P ⁴⁶

Apparently, such variations have led many scholars to question the integrity of Romans. For instance, according to one theory, (1) Paul’s original letter is consisted of chapters 1-14, written as a general letter, and later addressed to Rome in 1:7, 15 and chapter 15 when he sent the letter to Rome.⁴⁰ The majority of Paul’s interpreters reject this theory because it does not satisfactorily explain the origin of the fourteen-chapter variant.⁴¹ Another theory proposes, largely based on manuscript P⁴⁶, (2) that the original letter is comprised of chapters 1-15, addressed to the church at Rome,⁴² and then chapter 16 was added with its long list of greetings and sent to the church at Ephesus.⁴³ They hold

⁴⁰Kirsopp Lake, *The Earlier Epistles of St. Paul: Their Motive and Origin*, 2nd ed. (London: Rivingtons, 1919), 361-66. He regarded chap. 16 as a letter that was originally addressed to Ephesus.

⁴¹See Gamble, *Textual History*, 96-123. For a summary of Gamble’s rejection of this theory, see Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 56-57; Das, *Solving the Romans Debate*, 13-16.

⁴² According to textual criticism, there is no evidence that the Romans manuscript ever ends with chapter 15 (see above Table 2). For more details, see Peter Lampe, “The Roman Christians of Romans 16,” in *The Romans Debate*, rev. ed., ed. K. P. Donfried (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), 217-21.

⁴³T. W. Manson, “St. Paul’s Letters to the Romans and Others,” in *The Romans Debate*, rev. ed., ed. K. P. Donfried (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), 3-15. This essay first appeared in *BJRL* 31 (1948): 224-40; reprint in *Studies in the Gospels and Epistles*, ed. Matthew Black (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1962), 225-41. This theory was originally proposed by David Schulz, *Theologische Studien und Kritiken* (1829), cited in W. G. Kümmel, *Introduction to the New Testament*, trans. H. C. Kee, rev. ed. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1975), 318 n. 45. Manson attributed the fourteen-chapter version of Romans to Marcion’s deletion of chapters 15 and 16.

that this kind of long listing of greetings is beyond comparison with Paul's other letters. Moreover, it is more likely for him to have known such numerous friends in Ephesus, where Paul had ministered longer than in Rome, where he had never been.⁴⁴ A significant number of modern interpreters of Romans, however, reject the Ephesian hypothesis.⁴⁵ They contend that the list of greetings in Romans is highly improper for the Ephesian setting.⁴⁶ Examining the usage of greetings both outside and inside the New Testament, Mullins maintains that the greetings concur with other evidence that chapter 16 is part of the original letter.⁴⁷ Furthermore, Paul, who had ministered for quite a longtime there, would have created resentment or made an unfair distinction among the Ephesian believers by selecting some, while leaving out others.⁴⁸ According to Moo, "Textually this theory is on shaky ground from the outset, for there is no single MS of Romans that contains only 15 chapters."⁴⁹

Two other textual issues have been voiced against the originality of Romans 16, which centers on (1) the verses 17-20, the warning against the false teachers, and (2)

⁴⁴For a complete listing of the supporters of the Ephesian destination, see Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 57.

⁴⁵C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans: Introduction and Commentary on Romans I-VIII*, ICC (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1975; 10th reprint, London: T & T Clark International, 2004), 1:1-11; Wolf-Henning Ollrog, "Die Abfassungsverhältnisse von Rom 16," in *Kirche: Festschrift für Günther Bornkamm zum 75. Geburtstag*, ed. D. Lührmann and G. Strecker (Tübingen: Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1980), 226-27; Gamble, *The Textual History of the Letter to the Romans*, 47-55; Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 24-25; Wedderburn, *The Reasons for Romans*, 11-21; K. P. Donfried, "A Short Note on Romans," in *The Romans Debate*, rev. ed., ed. K. P. Donfried (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), 44-52; idem, "False Presuppositions in the Study of Romans," in *The Romans Debate*, rev. ed., ed. K. P. Donfried (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), 102-25; Weima, *Neglected Endings*, 216-17; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 59-64, though he once adopted the Ephesian hypothesis; Lampe, "The Roman Christians of Romans 16," 215-30.

⁴⁶For arguments about the complete list of people, see Gamble, *The Textual History of the Letter to the Romans*, 44-55. See Lampe, "The Roman Christians of Romans 16," 219-24.

⁴⁷Mullins, "Greeting as a New Testament Form," 418-26.

⁴⁸Ollrog, "Die Abfassungsverhältnisse," 237; Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 25.

⁴⁹Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 8. See also Wedderburn, *The Reasons for Romans*, 17.

the doxology (16:25-27). The Pauline authenticity of both texts has been questioned. The former seems to have introduced new subject matter, and an abrupt change in tone does not match the character of the remainder of the letter. Thus, a small group of interpreters of Romans identify this text as a non-Pauline interpolation.⁵⁰ The vocabulary and the subject matter of this passage, though, are additionally found earlier in the letter.⁵¹ For instance, παρακαλῶ δὲ ὑμεῖς, ἀδελφοί (now I urge you, brothers) in 16:17 is parallel to the phrase in 12:1 and 15:30. According to Donfried, the contention for new subject matter in verses 17-20 is not justified because two of the key terms, διδασκία (teaching, 6:17), and σκάνδαλον (stumbling block, 14:13; also its use in the OT quotations in 9:33 and 11:9), appear elsewhere in Romans.⁵² Even the “abrupt change of tone” is not something unnatural for Paul because it is found elsewhere in Paul’s other letters as well (e.g., 1 Cor 16:22; Col 4:17; Gal 6:12-17; Eph 6:10-17).⁵³ Besides these, Moo asserts that “there is no textual basis for omitting the verses, and the problems are not nearly as great as some

⁵⁰Lake, *The Earlier Epistles of St. Paul*, 326-27; John Knox, *Romans*, in *Interpreter's Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1964), 661-64; Ollrog, “Die Abfassungsverhältnisse,” 230-34; O'Neill, *Paul's Letter to the Romans*, 252-53; Walter Schmithals, “The False Teachers of Romans 16:17-20,” in *Paul and the Gnostics*, ed. Walter Schmithals (Nashville: Abingdon, 1972), 219-38; Robert Jewett, *Christian Tolerance: Paul's Message to the Modern Church* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1982), 17-22; idem, “Ecumenical Theology for the Sake of Mission,” 89-108; idem, *Romans*, 986-88; Brendan Byrne, *Romans*, Sacra Pagina 6 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1996), 446, 455-56.

⁵¹Contra Jewett, who subscribes to the views of Ollrog (“Die Abfassungsverhältnisse,” 230); O'Neill (*Paul's Letter to the Romans*, 258) identifies “six *hapax legomena* and at least eight expressions used in a non-Pauline way” (“Ecumenical Theology for the Sake of Mission,” 106). Such a view can be dismissed on the grounds that Paul, on numerous occasions, employed the same vocabulary and style in other letters differently.

⁵²For details, see Donfried, “A Short Note on Romans 16,” 51-52; idem, “False Presuppositions in the Study of Romans,” 119-21. See also Schreiner, *Romans*, 801.

⁵³Hort, *Prolegomena to St. Paul's Epistles to the Romans and the Ephesians*, 53-55. See also Gamble, *Textual History*, 52; Jervis, *The Purpose of Romans*, 152-53. For the genuineness of the text or its placement here, see U. Wilckens, *Der Brief an die Römer, teilband 3: Röm 12-16* (Zürich: Benziger, 1982), 139-40; T. Zahn, *Introduction to the New Testament* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1909), 1:408-10; Gamble, *The Textual History of the Letter to the Romans*, 88, 129-32; Seifrid, *Justification by Faith*, 198-99; J. P. Sampley, “Romans in a Different Light: A Response to Robert Jewett,” in *Pauline Theology*, vol. 3, *Romans*, ed. D. M. Hay and E. E. Johnson (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 127-28.

have made them.”⁵⁴

Concerning the latter, a large majority of recent scholars maintain that the doxology (16:25-27) was the work of a later redactor and, therefore, it was not originally included in the letter.⁵⁵ They have debated its placement in the letter—whether it belongs at the end of chapter 14, chapter 15, or chapter 16—because it is found in all the three positions in the textual tradition of Romans (see Table 2). This uncertainty about its placement has raised doubts regarding its authenticity in their minds. Even they allege that the language of these verses is non-Pauline, and Paul never concludes a letter with a doxology elsewhere. However, he does so here precisely out of theo-logical reasons. In addition, the doxology forms a fitting conclusion by affirming again in these verses the language and great themes of the epistle.⁵⁶ Table 3 illustrates that its language and themes are a recapitulation of what Paul did write earlier in the epistle, specifically in the letter opening. Consequently, it demonstrates that the doxology originated with Paul, and Romans 16 is an integral part of the original letter. In fact, Hort provides more

⁵⁴Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 928.

⁵⁵See, e.g., Kümmel, *Introduction*, 314-17; Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 1: 5-11; idem, *Commentary on Romans IX-XVI and Essays*, 2: 808-09; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 753; C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, HNTC (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1957), 11-13, 286; J. K. Elliott, “The Language and Style of the Concluding Doxology to the Epistle to the Romans,” *ZNW* 72 (1981): 124-30; J. D. G. Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, WBC, vol. 38B (Dallas: Word, 1988), 913; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 61-65, 753; Donfried, “A Short Note on Romans 16,” 50; Manson, “St. Paul's Letters to the Romans and Others,” 8-11; Byrne, *Romans*, 461-62; Raymond F. Collins, “The Case of a Wandering Doxology: Rom 16: 25-27,” in *New Testament Textual Criticism and Exegesis, Festschrift J. Delobel*, BETL 161 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2002), 293-303; Jewett, *Romans*, 998-1002. For a further listing of the supporters of a similar view, see Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 936-37 n. 2; Jewett, *Romans*, 998 n. 5. However, interestingly, Cranfield, Dunn, Donfried, Fitzmyer, and others who consider Rom 16:25-27 to be non-Pauline in origin strongly support the inclusion of chapter 16, and attest that the doxology is an appropriate conclusion for the letter that summarizes its major themes. Bacon accepts the doxology as a Pauline fragment, but he thinks that it was added later, deriving it from another context. See Benjamin W. Bacon, “The Doxology at the End of Romans,” *JBL* 18 (1899): 172-75.

⁵⁶ Geoffrey H. Parke-Taylor, “A Note on ‘εἰς ὑπακοὴν πίστεως’ in Romans 1:5 and 16:26,” *ExpTim* 55 (1943-44): 305-06; Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 937-38.

Table 3: The echoes of the language and themes in the doxology

The Language and Themes in Doxology	References in Romans
“Who is able” (power) (τῷ δὲ δυναμένῳ)	1:4, 16; cf. 1:20; 4:21; 11:23; 15:13
“Strengthen you” (ὁμᾶς στηρίξαι)	1:11
“[my] gospel” (τὸ εὐαγγέλιον [μου])	1:1, 9, 16; 2:16; 10:16; 11:28; 15:16
“the preaching of Jesus Christ” (τὸ κήρυγμα Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ)	15:19 (τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ Χριστοῦ)
“revelation” (ἀποκάλυψις) ⁵⁷	1:17, 18; 2:5; 8:18
“prophetical writings” (γραφῶν προφητικῶν)	1:2; 3:21
“obedience of faith” (ὁπακοήν πίστεως)	1:5; cf. 15:18; 16:19
“all the nations” (πάντα τὰ ἔθνη)	1:5; 11:22-25; 15 passim; 16:4
“only God” (μόνῳ θεῷ)	3:29-30
“wise God” (σοφῷ θεῷ)	11:33

compelling linguistic evidence not only for the Pauline character of the doxology, but for the integrity of the letter as well.⁵⁸ Moreover, Schreiner convincingly argues that decisive reasons exist for accepting Romans 16, in its entirety, as an integral part of the original letter sent to Rome.⁵⁹ The great majority of both the older and recent scholars actually maintain the authenticity of the doxology.⁶⁰ Hence, Wedderburn could affirm that the

⁵⁷For the language used for the term ‘revelation’ in Romans, see Klyne Snodgrass, “The Gospel in Romans: A Theology of Revelation,” in *Gospel in Paul: Studies on Corinthians, Galatians, and Romans for Richard Longenecker*, ed. L. Ann Jervis and Peter Richardson, JSNTSup 108 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 291.

⁵⁸For more details, see F. J. A. Hort, “On the End of the Epistle to the Romans,” in *Biblical Essays*, ed. J. B. Lightfoot (London: Macmillan & Co., 1904), 326-29. Lightfoot (*Biblical Essays*, 317-18) also provides linguistic evidence for the Pauline character of the doxology.

⁵⁹Schreiner, *Romans*, 8-10; others who advocate a 16-chapter letter are Peter Stuhlmacher, “The Purpose of Romans,” in *The Romans Debate*, rev. ed., ed. K. P. Donfried (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), 237; Das, *Solving the Romans Debate*, 16-23.

⁶⁰Hort, “On the End of the Epistle to the Romans,” 322-29; Frederick L. Godet, *Commentary on Romans* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1977), 506-09; William Sanday and Arthur C. Headlam, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, ICC (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1902), 436; R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans* (Columbus, OH: Wartburg Press, 1945), 926-27; Anders Nygren, *Commentary on Romans* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1949), 457; John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 2: 262-68; Larry W. Hurtado, “The Doxology at the End of Romans,” in *New Testament Criticism: Its Significance for Exegesis. Essays in*

pendulum of scholarly opinion now seems to have swung back toward the perspective that chapter 16 was part of the original letter to Rome.⁶¹ For this reason, the integrity and authenticity of the letter to the Romans are foundational not only to its proper interpretation, but additionally to the understanding of the author's dominant purpose behind the writing of the letter.

The Epistolary Frame

The form of the Pauline letters contains elements of contemporary Hellenistic letter writing, but much of it is original to the pastoral work of the apostle Paul and is a substitute for actual oral presence.⁶² Hence, a study of the epistolary framework of Romans shows a number of distinctive features, which are absent not only in many of the contemporary letter styles, but within Paul's own letters as well. The letter opening of Romans 1:1-17 and the letter closing in 15:14-16:27 constitute the epistolary framework of the letter.⁶³ In fact, these two texts frame the entire epistle with a common theme, "gospel." The gospel theme—both in its noun (εὐαγγέλιον in 1:1; 1:9; 1:16; 2:16; 15:16;

Honor of Bruce M. Metzger, ed. E. J. Epp and G. D. Fee (Oxford: Clarendon, 1981), 185-99; F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans: An Introduction and Commentary*, 5th ed., TNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), 281-82; D. B. Garlington, "The Obedience of Faith in the Letter to the Romans, Part I: The Meaning of ὑπακοή Πίστewς (Rom 1:5; 16:26)," *WTJ* 52 (1990): 201-24; Peter Stuhlmacher, *Paul's Letter to the Romans: A Commentary*, trans. S. J. Hafemann (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1994), 256; Weima, *Neglected Endings*, 142-43, 218-19; Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 936-37; Schreiner, *Romans*, 810-11; Howard Marshall, "Romans 16:25-27 – An Apt Conclusion," in *Romans and the People of God: Essays in Honor of Gordon D. Fee on the Occasion of His 65th Birthday*, ed. S. K. Soderlund and N. T. Wright (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 170-84.

⁶¹Wedderburn, *The Reasons for Romans*, 13. See also Donfried, *The Romans Debate*, lxx.

⁶²Kümmel, *Introduction to the New Testament*, 176-77; Russell, "Pauline Letter Structure in Philippians," 297.

⁶³See Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 33-34; Schreiner, *Romans*, 25-27; Snodgrass, "The Gospel in Romans," 290.

15:19; 16:25)⁶⁴ and cognate verb (εὐαγγελίζω in 1:15; 15:20) form—is explicit primarily in the “frame;” even its (gospel’s) correlated word “apostle” (1:1; 1:5; 11:13)⁶⁵ practically occurs in the “frame.” It is worthy of note that the words, like δύναμις (“power” or “strength,” 1:4, 16; 15:19; 16:25; cf. 1:20; 8:39; 9:17; 15:13) and ἀποκάλυψις (“revelation,” 1:17, 18; 2:5; 8:18; 16:25), which are very closely associated with the gospel, are virtually limited to the “frame,” as well. Two more closely linked words/phrases, ὑπακοήν πίστεως (“obedience of faith,” 1:5; cf. 15:18; 16:19, 26)⁶⁶ and ἔθνη (“nations”/“gentiles,” 1:5; 11:22-25; 15 passim; 16:4, 26), which are also precisely connected with the gospel, are similarly restricted to the “frame.” Besides these, this framework emphasizes Paul’s divine calling and obligation to preach the same gospel to all nations of the world. All these indicate that the theme “gospel,” along with associated words/phrases, connect the letter’s opening, body, and closing. Thus, examining the theme of “gospel” and related themes that appear in the epistolary frame of Romans would reveal a clearer understanding of his purpose of writing the letter.

The Letter Opening (1:1-17)

The interpreters of Romans recognize two main structures. (1) Some scholars take the first fifteen verses as one introductory unit of the letter opening, which is again

⁶⁴The noun εὐαγγέλιον occurs 9 times in Romans and, interestingly, it appears 3 times in each of the letter sections: the letter opening (1:1; 1:9; 1:16), the letter body (2:15; 10:16; 11:28), and the letter closing (15:16; 15:19; 16:25). Along with other closely related themes that are scattered throughout the letter, this signifies the integration of the whole letter. Hence, the term “gospel” permeates the entire letter.

⁶⁵Nils A. Dahl, “The Missionary Theology in the Epistle to the Romans,” in *Studies in Paul: Theology for the Early Christian Mission* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1977), 71. This idea is supported among others, such as G. Friedrich, “εὐαγγέλιον,” *TDNT* 2:733; A. Fridrichsen, “TO EYANGELION hos Paulus,” *NorTT* 13 (1912): 153-70, 209-56.

⁶⁶Miller recognized that the theme of obedience is the main focus in the frame of the letter, from which he derived the purpose of Romans. (See his book *The Obedience of Faith*.)

divided into two or three sections (1:1-7 and 1:8-15) or (1:1-7; 1:8-9, and 1:10-15). These interpreters view verses 1:16-17 as a separate section of the letter,⁶⁷ while others consider these verses to be part of the body of the letter.⁶⁸ Consequently, for them the letter body begins at verse 16. (2) Others recognize 1:1-17 as one introductory unit and divide this section into three sub-sections: (a) 1:1-7—prescript, (b) 1:8-15—thanksgiving and prayers; and (c) 1:16-17—the theme.⁶⁹ In verse 16, however, Paul is not introducing any new subject. Rather, it is clear that the theme εὐαγγέλιον (gospel) in this verse connects with verses 1, 9, and 15, in which he emphasizes that his calling as an apostle to the gentiles is for the service of the gospel. Hence, in this work, verses 1-17 will be considered as one introductory unit of the letter opening. The connection of these two verses with the previous section will be discussed more below. Paul employs the letter opening not merely as a means to establish or maintain contact with his audiences, but to further communicate his missiological intentions behind writing the letter as well.

The Epistolary Prescript (1:1-7)

The introductory section, or the prescript—according to Exler—constitutes a real epistolary category.⁷⁰ It is “the monumental introduction of the epistle to the

⁶⁷E.g., Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 33. Weima, “Preaching the Gospel in Rome,” 337.

⁶⁸E.g., Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 96-101, 253; Keck, *Romans*, 23, 50; Jervis, *The Purpose of Romans*, 106-07.

⁶⁹P. J. Achtemeier, *Romans*, Interpretation (Atlanta: John Knox, 1985), 35-37; Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 32-33; G. R. Osborne, *Romans*, IVPNTC (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 24; Schreiner, *Romans*, 25; cf. P. T. O’Brien, *Gospel and Mission in the Writings of Paul: An Exegetical and Theological Analysis* (Grand Rapids: Baker; Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 1995), 53-77; Paul Barnett, *Romans: The Revelation of God’s Righteousness* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2003), 21-41.

⁷⁰Exler, *The Form of the Ancient Greek Letter*, 23-68.

Romans.”⁷¹ The underlying conviction seems to be that the prescript should express the relationship between sender and recipient.⁷² The Romans’ prescript, though, comprises one of the apostle’s classic theological statements concerning the content of the gospel to which he is called to preach to the nations. It follows not only the conventional form of the contemporary Hellenistic letter, but is consistent with the other Pauline letter structure, which usually consisted of three epistolary conventions, namely: (1) sender, (2) recipient(s), and (3) greeting.⁷³

While the recipient and greeting elements are comparatively similar to Paul’s practice elsewhere, the sender form has been extended beyond comparison and presents many distinctive features of the letter opening. For this reason, the opening section is considered to be “the longest and most theologically complex of all the Pauline openings.”⁷⁴ Perhaps it is due mainly to the fact that Paul is introducing himself to a church that he had neither founded nor visited (1:10, 13; 15:22). Paul wants to establish his qualifications as an apostle with a commission to proclaim the gospel among all the nations (gentiles), including Rome. This is, possibly, highlighted by Paul’s lengthy introduction of himself and his deliberate omission of any co-senders, who are regularly mentioned in other Pauline letters written to churches.⁷⁵ In fact, Romans 16:21 lists

⁷¹W. Bousset, *Kyrios Christos: A History of the Belief in Christ from the Beginnings of Christianity to Irenaeus*, trans. John E. Steely (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1970), 206.

⁷²See White, *Light from Ancient Letters*, 198-200.

⁷³See 1 Cor 1:1-3; 2 Cor 1:1-2; Gal 1:1-5; Eph 1:1-2; Phil 1:1-2; Col 1:1-2; 1 Thess 1:1; 2 Thess 1:1-2; 1 Tim 1:1-2; 2 Tim 1:1-2; Titus 1:1-4; Phlm 1-3. For a comparative study, see Jervis, *The Purpose of Romans*, 69-72.

⁷⁴Schreiner, *Romans*, 31.

⁷⁵E.g., 1 Cor 1:1; 2 Cor 1:1; Gal 1:1-2; Phil 1:1; Col 1:1; 1 Thess 1:1; 2 Thess 1:1. Ephesians is

Timothy, who is with Paul when he writes this letter, and yet he does not include his name in the greeting. This apparently emphasizes Paul's distinctive authority as the apostle to the nations (gentiles).⁷⁶

Paul's Call for Preaching the Gospel (v. 1). In the 'sender' element in the Romans prescript, Paul draws our attention to his divine call and commission for worldwide gospel preaching. He introduces himself with three designations that underline his unique and important function in respect to the gospel, namely: (1) "a servant of Christ Jesus," (2) "called to be an apostle," and (3) "set apart for the gospel of God."⁷⁷ Paul's use of the designation "a servant of Christ Jesus" is unique in the prescript of Romans. Although Paul calls himself a "servant" in two other prescripts—to the Philippians (but with Timothy) and Titus (to an individual)—Romans is the only church to which he introduces himself as a "servant" without referring to a co-worker. It is quite probable that Paul derives the term δούλος, meaning "servant" or "slave," from the OT use of עֶבֶד יְהוָה (*'ebed yhwah*), which references outstanding people like Moses, Joshua, Elijah, Nehemiah, David, and the prophets (Josh 1:1, 13; 24:29; 2 Kgs 10:10; Neh 1:6; Ps 89:4, 21; 2 Kgs 17:23; Isa 49:4) either as "servant of the Lord" or as "servant of God."⁷⁸ The usage of the designation "servant of God" continued even during the

the only other letter addressed to a church that does not include a co-sender.

⁷⁶J. D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, WBC, vol. 38A (Dallas: Word Books, 1988), 7; Jervis, *The Purpose of Romans*, 70-71; Weima, "Preaching the Gospel in Rome," 340; Schreiner, *Romans*, 32.

⁷⁷Moo (*The Epistle to the Romans*, 40) recognizes here three parallel designations, which identify (i) his master; (ii) his office; and (iii) his purpose.

⁷⁸K. H. Rengstorf, "δούλος," *TDNT* 2: 268, 276-77; BDAG, 260; Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 41; Schreiner, *Romans*, 32; Osborne, *Romans*, 28.

intertestamental period for referring to divinely inspired prophets (e.g., 1QH 1:3; 4 Ezra 1:32; 2:1, 18). The term “slave” implies total devotion to his master, thus emphasizing Paul’s bondage to the service of his Master, Christ Jesus, who is exalted above all. It is true that the designation used with the name Christ Jesus, the exalted Lord, ascribes to Paul a greater honor, or his service to a greater authority, as some commentators underline.⁷⁹ The meanings of humility, devotion, and obedience, however, are always associated with the OT phrase as they are here.⁸⁰ In addition, Moo is of the opinion that Paul’s use of the order of the title “Christ Jesus” draws particular attention to the Messiah Jesus, and may suggest as well the corporate and universal significance of this messiahship.⁸¹ If this interpretation is correct, the designation “slave of Christ Jesus” is very important in relation to the gospel for which he was called to preach to the nations.

The second designation, “called to be an apostle” (κλητός ἀπόστολος), possesses similar authoritative functions in regard to the gospel. The Greek word rendering “called” (κλητός)⁸² in Paul refers to the effective work of God, by which He calls people to salvation and office.⁸³ In fact, utilizing the verbal adjective κλητός clarifies a divine initiative behind Paul’s call to apostolic office. Of the nine letters⁸⁴ in which

⁷⁹E.g., Ernest Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 5. See also Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 41; Schreiner, *Romans*, 32.

⁸⁰Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 41.

⁸¹Ibid.

⁸²The word rendered “called” (κλητός) is an adjective qualifying the noun “apostle,” so it literally means “a called apostle.” See Barclay M. Newman and Eugene A. Nida, *A Translator’s Handbook on Paul’s Letter to the Romans* (London: United Bible Societies, 1973), 7.

⁸³Schreiner, *Romans*, 32.

⁸⁴Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Timothy, and Titus.

Paul identifies himself as an “apostle (ἀπόστολος, meaning messenger),”⁸⁵ in only two has he spoken of himself as a “called apostle” (1 Cor 1:1 and Rom 1:1). “This feature of Paul’s apostleship,” notes Jervis, “is what sets him apart from the other apostles.”⁸⁶ Paul holds a unique position because he was the first person whom the risen Christ specifically “called” to be an apostle to the gentiles.⁸⁷ Similarly, Jervis remarks that Paul perceived his distinctiveness in the fact that he was the original apostle to the gentiles.⁸⁸ With this phrase, Paul explains that “he was neither self-appointed nor chosen by men to that sacred office.”⁸⁹ The risen Christ Himself appeared to him (1 Cor 15:8) and “called” him to this office for His special mission to the nations (gentiles, Rom 11: 13; 1 Tim 2:7; 2 Tim 1:11). As a result, when Paul states that he is “called to be an apostle,” Paul is affirming that he is an authoritative representative of Jesus Christ, for he is directly commissioned by Him (2 Cor 11:12; Gal 1:1) and receives revelation from Him (1 Cor

⁸⁵For further understanding of NT apostleship, see K. H. Rengstorf, “ἀπόστολος,” in *TDNT* 1: 407-46; Rudolf Schnackenburg, “Apostles Before and During Paul’s Time,” in *Apostolic History and the Gospel*, ed. W. Ward Gasque and Ralph P. Martin (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), 287-303; J. A. Kirk, “Apostleship Since Rengstorf: Toward a Synthesis,” *NTS* 21 (1975): 263; Robert D. Culver, “Apostles and the Apostolate in the New Testament,” *BSac* 134 (1977): 131-43; R. W. Herron Jr., “The Origin of the New Testament Apostolate,” *WTJ* 45 (1983): 101-31; C. Dorsey, “Paul’s Use of Ἀπόστολος,” *RQ* 28 (1986): 196-200.

⁸⁶Jervis, *The Purpose of Romans*, 72. Paul never used this term while referring to the Twelve (e.g., 1 Cor 15:5, 7), to other apostles who lived during his time (2 Cor 12:11; Phil 2:25; Rom 16:7), or to apostles who were active before him (Gal 1:17, 19). As a result, Dorsey observed that the apostles who were known to Paul were “sent out,” either by Christ or by a church, to perform a specific function. See Dorsey, “Paul’s Use of Ἀπόστολος,” 196-200.

⁸⁷Kirk, “Apostleship Since Rengstorf,” 263; also Dorsey, “Paul’s Use of Ἀπόστολος,” 200. Dunn (*Romans* 1-8, 16) has observed that this call from the risen Lord demonstrates that Jesus Christ is still active in the ongoing work of redemption. Eckhard J. Schnabel (*Early Christian Mission*, vol. 2, *Paul and the Early Church* [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004], 932) points out that Paul’s letters and Luke’s account in the Book of Acts (Gal 1:15-16; 1 Cor 9:1; 15:8; Acts 9:1-19; 22:3-16; 26:9-18) report that “Damascus” was the hour in which Paul became a missionary to the Gentiles.

⁸⁸Jervis, *The Purpose of Romans*, 72.

⁸⁹Charles Hodge, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (Philadelphia: James and Claxton, 1864), 20.

2:10; Gal 1:11-12).⁹⁰

Paul's final designation, "set apart for the gospel of God" (ἀφωρισμένος εἰς εὐαγγέλιον θεοῦ)—unique to the identification of the sender element of the Romans prescript—is unparalleled with other Pauline-letter openings. The emphasis on Paul's divine commission continues with the phrase "set apart" (ἀφωρισμένος).⁹¹ God sets him apart for apostolic ministry. Schreiner recalls that the two words "calling" (καλεῖν) and "separate" (ἀφορίζειν) are additionally used in Paul's call to preach the gospel to the gentiles in Galatians 1:15, in which, according to Paul, "God who separated me from my mother's womb and called me through his grace."⁹² This echoes the call to ministry in the tradition of Isaiah's prophetic vocation (Isa 49:1) and that of Jeremiah (Jer 1:5), suggesting that Paul is invested with authority from God Himself.⁹³ Thus, when all three designations are combined, it seems that Paul ascertains before his readers the similar authority and ministry discharged by the OT prophets. Like them, he is entrusted with proclaiming the "gospel of God." Paul is not preaching any new message, but the fulfillment of the OT promise (Rom 1:2; 16:26).⁹⁴ Therefore, Weima rightly points out "the intimate relationship between the themes of 'gospel' and 'apostleship'—correlated

⁹⁰David J. MacLeod, "Eternal Son, Davidic Son, Messianic Son: An Exposition of Romans 1:1-7," *BSac* 162 (2005): 79.

⁹¹The Greek word ἀφωρισμένος is in (i) perfect tense, indicating a singular event in the past with continuing effects. (ii) It is in passive voice, showing that God "set apart" Paul. It recalls Paul's Damascus Road experience, though which he was called and separated for his apostolic office for preaching the gospel to the gentiles.

⁹²Schreiner, *Romans*, 33; idem, *Paul: Apostle of God's Glory in Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 44.

⁹³Schreiner, *Paul*, 44; Osborne, *Romans*, 29; Weima, "Gospel in Paul," 341.

⁹⁴S. Lewis Johnson Jr., "The Jesus That Paul Preached," *BSac* 128 (1971): 126.

themes that will manifest themselves again and again in the epistolary frame of the letter.”⁹⁵ What is noteworthy is Paul’s integration of himself into God’s worldwide plan as a significant and indispensable messenger of “the gospel of God.”⁹⁶ The phrase “the gospel of God” appears seven times in the Pauline letters (1 Thess 2:2, 8, 9; 2 Cor 11:7; Rom 1:1; 15:16; 1 Tim 1:11). Most remarkable is the fact that Paul introduces and concludes the subject and his exposition of it in Romans as “the gospel of God” (1:1 and 15:16). Consequently, Eduard Lohse describes “the gospel of God” as framing the letter.⁹⁷ Here the gospel is “the gospel of God.”⁹⁸ The genitive construction⁹⁹ “of God” is significant here. It is suggested that it may be understood as both subjective and objective genitive. In this sense, the gospel is the saving message “from God” and “about God.” Hence, A. B. Luter comments, “As in virtually every occurrence of this phrase in Paul, the genitive makes good sense if it is read either way. Sometimes the context appears to underline the objective aspect (e.g., 1 Thess 3:2; 1 Cor 9:12; Gal 1:2; etc.), sometimes the

⁹⁵Weima, “Gospel in Paul,” 341.

⁹⁶Rengstorff, “ἀπόστολος,” 1: 438; Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 22.

⁹⁷Eduard Lohse, “Εὐαγγέλιον θεοῦ: Paul’s Interpretation of the Gospel in His Epistle to the Romans,” *Biblica* 76 (1995): 127-40, especially 131.

⁹⁸Elsewhere, Paul views this gospel as “the gospel of Christ” (τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ Χριστοῦ, 1 Thess 3:2; 1 Cor 9:12; 2 Cor 2:12; 9:13; 10:14; Gal 1:7; Phil 1:27; Rom 15:19); of “his Son” (τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ, Rom 1:9; cf. 1:3); or “of our Lord Jesus” (τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ, 2 Thess 1:8).

⁹⁹For a long time, the issue of whether the construction of τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ θεοῦ or τοῦ Χριστοῦ should be interpreted as subjective or objective genitive has been in dispute. For some, the genitive τοῦ θεοῦ is subjective (genitive of author or origin), and τοῦ Χριστοῦ is objective (about Christ): for example, James Morrison, “The Christology of St. Paul,” *Expositor* 9 (1879): 111; George Milligan, *St. Paul’s Epistles to the Thessalonians* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1908), 8; Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 10; F. J. Leenhardt, *The Epistle to the Romans: A Commentary* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1961), 34-35; Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 1: 55; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 232; O’Brien, *Gospel and Mission*, 67. Conversely, for others, no decision is possible on purely formal grammatical grounds. The genitive of τοῦ θεοῦ or τοῦ Χριστοῦ are both objective and subjective: for instance, Friedrich, *TDNT* 2: 731; Sanday and Headlam, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 5; V. P. Furnish, *Jesus according to Paul* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 68-69; Strecker, cited by Peter Stuhlmacher, “The Pauline Gospel,” in *The Gospel and the Gospels*, ed. Peter Stuhlmacher (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 153 n.14; Schreiner, *Romans*, 37.

subjective (e.g., 1 Thess 2:2, 8, 9; Rom 1:1; etc.), and either is equally possible.”¹⁰⁰ It is true that the construction denotes that Paul’s gospel message “originates with God” or “originates in God.” In other words, God is the “source and authority of his message,” or the gospel is “from God himself” that Paul is called to proclaim. It is also equally true that it may mean that the gospel message is “about God,” as Leon Morris reminds us that Romans is “a book about God, but it is about God in action, God saving men in Christ.”¹⁰¹

The OT Affirmation of the Gospel (v. 2). After presenting his identity as the servant, apostle, and messenger of the gospel of God in the pattern of the OT prophets, Paul offers a description of the gospel that he is called to preach. The functions are further establishing the trustworthiness of his message and winning the confidence of his readers. For this reason, the first feature calls attention to the gospel of God, “which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures” (v. 2). After having defined “the gospel” by the genitive “of God” (θεοῦ), Paul additionally defines it with the relative clause “which” (ὃ), and makes three emphatic affirmations about it: (1) He [God] promised beforehand, (2) through His [God’s] prophets, (3) in the OT Scriptures. Cranfield views the gospel as “the fulfillment of God’s promises through his prophets in the OT.”¹⁰² Hence, this statement in verse 2 establishes the “promise-fulfillment” pattern

¹⁰⁰A. B. Luter, “Gospel,” in *DPL* (Chicago: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 370.

¹⁰¹Leon Morris, “The Theme of Romans,” in *Apostolic History and the Gospel: Biblical and Historical Essays Presented to F. F. Bruce on His 60th Birthday*, ed. W. Ward Gasque and Ralph P. Martin (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), 249-63.

¹⁰²Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 1:55. So Robert H. Mounce, *Romans*, NAC, vol. 27 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1995), 60. In fact, the phrase *διὰ τῶν προφητῶν αὐτοῦ* should be considered to mean the entire OT Scripture as prophetic in nature, rather than just a portion of it. See Schreiner, *Romans*, 38.

dominating Paul's OT usage. O'Brien observed that "the trustworthiness of the gospel is underlined by this expression—it is God who promised it."¹⁰³ Moreover, one should not miss the underlying emphasis of the phrase. The gospel that he is called to preach is neither his own invention nor entirely a new teaching; neither is it antithetical to, nor contradictory of, the OT Scriptures. It instead establishes complete continuity with the OT message. It fulfills the OT scriptural promise. Thus, Paul's authority is highlighted by his divine calling, as an apostle for the gospel of God as the fulfillment of His promises made in the OT.

God's Son as the Content of the Gospel (vv. 3-4). In order to win the confidence of his readers, Paul, in verses 3-4, furnishes the substance of "the gospel of God." Indeed, God's "promises" as set forth in those prophetic writings were "concerning his [God's] Son." He was of David's seed, according to the flesh, who was appointed Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness from the resurrection of the dead, our Lord Jesus Christ. The prepositional phrase *περὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ* is quite decisive because it modifies *εὐαγγέλιον θεοῦ*, expressing its content.¹⁰⁴ It means that the gospel from God and about Him is centered on His Son, and this Son fulfills what God promised in the "holy scriptures."¹⁰⁵ According to Fitzmyer, the title of God's Son governs the entire formula. Therefore, both phrases (coming from the seed of David and installed as the Son

¹⁰³O'Brien, *Gospel and Mission*, 67; Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 1:56.

¹⁰⁴Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 10. Contra Richard B. Hays (*Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989], 85), according to whom it is not decisive that the prepositional phrase *περὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ* modifies *γραφᾶς ἁγίας*.

¹⁰⁵Schreiner, *Romans*, 38.

of God in power by His resurrection) about the Son denote pre-existence.¹⁰⁶ It is not evident that Paul was citing a confessional or creedal formulae in these verses, although most modern scholars think otherwise.¹⁰⁷ Traditional OT language, though, certainly appears in these verses.¹⁰⁸

Hence, by connecting the sonship of Jesus Christ with the lineage of David, as Peter does at Pentecost (Acts 2:22-36), Paul actually is making a clear allusion to the messianic stature of the Son.¹⁰⁹ It reflects that the Son of God is pre-existent to His

¹⁰⁶Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 235; cf., C. E. B. Cranfield, "Some Comments on Professor J. D. G. Dunn's *Christology in the Making* with Special Reference to the Evidence of the Epistle to the Romans," in *The Glory of Christ in the New Testament*, ed. L. D. Hurst and N. T. Wright (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987), 269-71. Contra James D. G. Dunn, *The Christology in the Making: A New Testament Inquiry into the Origins of the Doctrine of the Incarnation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 33-35.

¹⁰⁷E.g., see A. M. Hunter, *Paul and His Predecessors* (London: Nicholson and Watson, 1940), 25-30; Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, vol. 1, trans. K. Grobel (New York: Scribner, 1951), 49-50; Barrett, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 3, 20; E. Linnemann, "Tradition and Interpretation in Röm 1:3f," *EvT* 31 (1971): 264-75; Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 1:57 n. 5; P. Stuhlmacher, "Theologische Probleme des Römerbrief präskripts," *EvT* 27 (1967): 374-89; Richard N. Longenecker, *The Christology of Early Jewish Christianity* (London: SCM, 1970), 96; G. Bornkamm, *Paul*, trans. D. M. G. Stalker (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 248; Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 10-14; Paul Beasley-Murray, "Romans 1:3f.: An Early Confession of Faith in the Lordship of Jesus," *TynBul* 31 (1980): 147-54; Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 5, 10-16; R. Jewett, "The Reaction and Use of an Early Christian Confession in Romans 1:3-4," in *The Living Text: Essays in Honor of Ernest W. Saunders*, ed. D. E. Gorh and R. Jewett, 99-122 (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1985), 100-02.

¹⁰⁸E.g., C. V. Poythress, "Is Romans 1:3-4 a Pauline Confession after All?" *ExpTim* 87 (1975-76), 180-83; Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 44; James M. Scott, *Adoption as Sons of God: An Exegetical Investigation into the Background of ΥΙΟΘΕΣΙΑ in the Pauline Corpus*, WUNT 2 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1992), 227-36; Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 45-46 n. 31.

¹⁰⁹Douglas J. Moo, "The Christology of the Early Pauline Letters," in *Contours of Christology in the New Testament*, ed. R. N. Longenecker (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 187; L. W. Hurtado, *One God, One Lord: Early Christian Devotion and Ancient Jewish Monotheism*, 2nd ed. (London: T & T Clark, 2003), 95. In Ps Sol 17:21, 23 only, the expression "Son of David" is found in the period before Christianity, but it becomes a current expression among the contemporaries of Jesus; the rabbis will often use it. (See F. J. Leenhardt, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 36 n.) The focus of the Davidic origin of Son echoes the OT prophetic expectation – "a ruler will come from Davidic line" promised by God in the Scriptures (Isa 11:1-5; Jer 23:5-6; Ezek 34:23-24). In fact, these words assert the Davidic lineage of Jesus in agreement with the testimony of other parts of the NT (Matt 1:1; 20:30-31; Luke 1:27, 32, 69; 2:4; Acts 2:30; 13:22-23; 2 Tim 2:8; Rev 5:5; 22:16). Consequently, the expectation that the Messiah would belong to the family of David is strongly established, although some Jews of the NT period do not regard descent from David as an absolutely essential qualification for the Messiah. (See Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 1: 58.)

earthly birth. Furthermore, this Davidic tradition implies that Jesus is the “Royal messianic Son of God.” Romans 1:3-4 contains echoes of 2 Samuel 7:12-14. As the “seed (σπέρμα) of David,” Christ was “raised up (ἀνάστασις) from the dead” by God (cf. LXX 2 Sam 7:12). The appointment of Jesus as the Son of God in power in Romans 1:4 may echo God’s promise in 2 Samuel 7:14: “I will be a father to him, and he will be to me a son.” (See 1:9-10; 15:24-28). The Davidic lineage of the Lord Jesus is a significant element of Paul’s gospel (Rom 15:12; 2 Tim 2:8). For this reason, one should not ignore the connection between Romans 1:2 and 3. Jesus, as the Son of David, fulfills God’s promise made in the OT regarding a future ruler from David’s line.¹¹⁰ Leslie C. Allen demonstrates that the appointment of Christ as God’s Son in verse 4 refers to Psalm 2, in which Yahweh has decreed that He has “begotten” the King as His Son, and assumes that Jesus—the Son of God—is the messianic heir of David’s line. (See Ps 2:7; 1QSa 2:11-12; 4QFlor 1:10-13.)¹¹¹ In addition, Yahweh will give this “royal Son” all the nations as his inheritance (Ps 2:8). This, in fact, alludes to Paul’s reference to his mission for securing the “obedience of faith among all the nations (ἔθνεσιν)” (Rom 1:5). The appointment of Jesus as the Son of God occurred ἐξ ἀναστάσεως νεκρῶν. This does not mean that, prior to the resurrection, Jesus was not the Son of God. He was already “the Son of God” when and before He became of the seed of David.¹¹² Paul does not say that He was made the Son of God by the resurrection from the dead, but He was “appointed” or “installed”

¹¹⁰Schreiner, *Romans*, 40.

¹¹¹Leslie C. Allen, “The Old Testament Background of (Προ)᾿Ορίζειν in the New Testament,” *NTS* 17 (1970-71): 104-08.

¹¹²Similarly B. B. Warfield, “The Christ that Paul Preached,” *The Expositor* 15 (1918): 99; W. C. Van Unnik, “Jesus the Christ,” *NTS* 8 (1962): 108.

(ὁρισθέντος)¹¹³ as the Son of God in power by the Spirit of His holiness. Through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, God Himself inaugurates the new age and gives Messiah, the Son of God, exalted to be our Lord (Phil 2:9-11). As the Lord, He has the power to dispense salvation to all the nations (Rom 1:9, 16). In the opening verse (1:1), Jesus Christ is given the full title “our Lord Jesus Christ” (1:4), implying the universal nature of the gospel that Paul was called to preach. What is significant is that Paul implemented traditional language to describe the content of the gospel, indicating to his readers that he shares with them a common faith and restores their confidence in the orthodox and universal nature of his message.

The Scope of the Gospel: All Nations of the World (vv. 5-7). Paul quite confidently establishes his credibility in terms of his person (the servant and the called apostle); his mission (preaching the gospel of God); and his message (promised in the OT about God’s Son, Jesus Christ). He reemphasizes his identity as an apostle, however, in verse 5a. As a result, Paul first places his apostleship in relation to Christ by saying δι’ οὗ ἐλάβομεν χάριν καὶ ἀποστολήν, indicating that “Jesus Christ our Lord” (in v. 4) is the agent (διὰ) of his apostleship. Paul’s usage of “we received” (ἐλάβομεν) is sometimes understood as a literary/real plural, that is, including other Christians as recipients of grace or fellow apostles besides Paul himself.¹¹⁴ The majority interpreters of Paul,

¹¹³The Greek participle ὁρισθέντος should not be translated to mean “to declare” as in ASV, NIV, NEB, ESV, NASB, and NRSV. The verb clearly has the meaning of “appoint,” or “install” or “ordain” in this context and consistently translated in other NT passages (e.g., Luke 22:22; Acts 2:23; 10:42; 11:29; 17:26, 31; Heb 4:7). See Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 9-10; Schreiner, *Romans*, 42. For various meanings of ὀρίζειν, see Newman and Nida, *A Translator’s Handbook*, 10.

¹¹⁴E.g., Sanday and Headlam, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 10; A. Schlatter, *Romans: The Righteousness of God*, trans. S. S. Schatzmann (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995), 10; Barrett, *A*

though, understand this as an epistolary plural, which is additionally known as the editorial/epistolary plural.¹¹⁵ This indicates that, in Pauline writings, the first-person plural is frequently recognized as an apostolic plural, which entitles Paul himself.¹¹⁶

Wallace writes in a similar tone,

Paul mentions only himself as author (v. 1), rendering the plural here as most likely epistolary. Further, it is unlikely that he has in mind other apostles because of the prepositional phrase, detailing the purpose of the apostleship, that immediately follows: εἰς ὑπακοήν πίστεως ἐν πᾶσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν (for the obedience of the faith among all the Gentiles). Since Paul alone was the apostle to the Gentiles, the *we* is evidently editorial.¹¹⁷

This explains the reason that Paul does not have two things in view in the usage of the phrase “grace and apostleship” (χάριν καὶ ἀποστολήν).¹¹⁸ Rather, in this context, χάρις and ἀπόστολη seem to be set in hendiadys, by which these two words that explain one idea connected by a conjunction (καί), which may mean “grace of

Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, 21; BDF, 280; Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 16; Weima, “Preaching the Gospel in Rome,” 343. See Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 51; E. A. Nida, “Implications of Contemporary Linguistics for Biblical Scholarship,” *JBL* 91 (1972): 81.

¹¹⁵For the definition of literary and editorial plurals, see Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar: Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 393-94.

¹¹⁶E.g., Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 1:65; Leenhardt, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 38 n.; C. F. D. Moule, *An Idiom Book of New Testament Greek*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959), 118-19; M. Zerwick, *Biblical Greek Illustrated by Examples* (Rome: Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 2001), 4; Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 14; Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 48; Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 51; Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 395; Schreiner, *Romans*, 33-34 (especially see his four pieces of evidence in favor of this argument [34]).

¹¹⁷Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 395. Similarly, Murray points out that “he [Paul] lays stress upon his apostleship to the Gentiles in this context, and singularity would appear to be required at this point” (*The Epistle to the Romans*, 12-13). Schreiner’s observation also underscores this point. According to him, “The steady repetition of the first-person singular in verses 8-16 suggests that Paul was thinking of his own apostolic ministry in verse 5” (*Romans*, 34). Cf. Gal 2:9 in relation to this.

¹¹⁸Contra BDF (280), Barrett (*A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 21), Weima (“Preaching the Gospel in Rome,” 343), and others: χάρις (grace) includes addressees and other Christians. ἀποστολήν (apostleship) here applies to Paul himself. Thus, he may have in view two different things for these interpreters, which is more unlikely.

apostleship” or “grace that is apostleship.”¹¹⁹ Therefore, the second term explains the first, meaning that Paul has received the special gift of being an apostle. Matthew Black comments that Paul’s apostleship is due to the totally unmerited act of grace in the divine revelation to him through the resurrected Christ.¹²⁰ Consequently, as in verse 1, the attention of Paul’s readers is drawn to the fact that through the mediation of the crucified and resurrected Lord Jesus Christ, whom they acknowledge as well, he has received his apostolic commission.

In verse 1, Paul affirms his calling as an apostle with the task of preaching the gospel. He then returns to describe the main purpose of his apostolic call: “to bring about the obedience of faith among all the nations for his name’s sake” (1:5).¹²¹ Paul uses three prepositional phrases and draws attention to three aspects of his apostleship. For example, εἰς ὑπακοήν πίστεως denotes *purpose* (for the obedience of faith); ἐν πᾶσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν signifies the *sphere* (among all the nations); and ὑπὲρ τοῦ ὀνόματος αὐτοῦ conveys *ultimate focus* (for the sake of His name). All three of them exemplify “the totality of Paul’s missionary endeavors.”¹²² The first expression, “for the obedience of faith,” means

¹¹⁹See Turner, *Grammar of New Testament Greek*, 3: 335. As also in BDF (442.16), “The co-ordination of the two ideas, one of which is dependent on the other (hendiadys), serves in the NT to avoid a series of dependent genitives.” In light of this, however, it is incongruous that BDF takes ἐλάβομεν in Rom 1:5 as literal plural sense. Hence, BDF contradicts its own view with BDF 280. (See above n. 113.)

¹²⁰Matthew Black, *Romans*, NCBC, 2nd ed. (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973), 23. See also Rom 12:3 and 15:15 for Paul’s use of grace in relation to his apostleship.

¹²¹Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 13; Black, *Romans*, 24. Mark A. Seifrid, *Christ, Our Righteousness: Paul’s Theology of Justification*, NSBT 9 (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2000), 135. According to D. B. Garlington, “Rom 1:5 can be looked upon as a programmatic statement of the main purpose of Romans” (*Faith, Obedience, and Perseverance: Aspects of Paul’s Letter to the Romans*, WUNT 79 [Tübingen: Mohr, 1994], 10). For a similar view, see Miller, *The Obedience of Faith*, 60.

¹²²D. B. Garlington, “The Obedience of Faith in the Letter to the Romans, Part I,” 201; idem, *The Obedience of Faith: A Pauline Phrase in Historical Context*, WUNT 38 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1991), 253.

that the missionary purpose of Paul’s apostolic call is bringing nations to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The gospel of God that focuses on His Son—Jesus Christ—for which Paul was called to preach, was intended to bring *all nations* [emphasis added] to the obedience of faith. Paul mentions in the conclusion that his apostolic call to bring about “the obedience of faith” has already impacted all nations “from Jerusalem as far as Illyricum” (15:17-19). The precise meaning of the phrase, though, has considerable significance because it is once again repeated verbatim in the doxology (16:26) and echoed in 15:18; this has been debated among the scholars. Three possible interpretations of the genitive *πίστεως* are offered. The first is the objective genitive, considering “faith” as a body of doctrine or belief that one is to obey, which is suggested by only a few.¹²³ The other two possible options are a subjective¹²⁴ or an expegetic/appositional genitive.¹²⁵ According to the former, faith is the basis for, or motivating force behind obedience: or—in other words—“obedience that springs from faith.” The latter emphasizes faith as a definition of obedience: that is, “the obedience which is faith.” Perhaps Paul may have both views in mind, which some think is the most likely solution.¹²⁶ Although—in view of the latter—

¹²³Sanday and Headlam, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 11, and others. When “faith” is interpreted in this way, though an article is expected – “the faith,” as in Acts 6:7, ὑπήκουον τῇ πίστει. Paul and the other apostles do refer to conversion in terms of obedience to truth or doctrine, e.g., 2 Thess 1:8; 3:14; Rom 6:17; 10:16; 1 Pet 1:22; 2 Pet 4:17.

¹²⁴E.g., see A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research*, 4th ed. (Nashville: Broadman, 1923), 500; Bruce, *The Letter of Paul to the Romans*, 70; Black, *Romans*, 24; William Hendriksen, *Exposition of Paul’s Epistle to the Romans, Chapters 1-8* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980), 1:45; G. N. Davis, *Faith and Obedience in Romans: A Study in Romans 1-4*, JSNTSup 39 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1990), 25-30.

¹²⁵See, e.g., Sanday and Headlam, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 11; Nygren, *Commentary on Romans*, 55; Barrett, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 21; John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul to the Romans*, ed. and trans. John Owen (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959), 48; Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 13-14; Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 1: 64-66; Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 14; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 237.

¹²⁶Garlington, “The Obedience of Faith in the Letter to the Romans, Part I,” 201-02; idem, *The Obedience of Faith*, 10-31; John Stott, *The Message of Romans: God’s Good News for the World* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 52.

faith and obedience go together,¹²⁷ they are not identical or synonymous¹²⁸ because whoever accepts the gospel in faith can be described as being obedient (contrary to Rom 10:16). In his letters, however, the term obedience alludes to the person's total response to, or acceptance of, the gospel in faith (cf. Rom 14:23b). This is evident in Paul's reflection on the transforming nature of Roman believers' "obedience from the heart" in Romans 6:17, and on his mission in Romans 15:18 in reference to "the obedience of the gentiles" to the teaching of the gospel. Hence, this obedience in response to the gospel "is always closely related to faith, both as an initial, decisive step of faith and as a continuing 'faith' relationship with Christ."¹²⁹ Moo rightly comments that "the phrase captures the full dimension of Paul's apostolic task, a task that was not confined to initial evangelization, but that included also the building up and firm establishment of churches."¹³⁰

The second prepositional phrase communicates the *sphere* of Paul's apostolic mission, "among all the nations" (ἐν πᾶσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν). His apostolic commission is unique because he was called to preach to the nations (Acts 9:15; 22:21; Rom 11:13; 15:16; Gal 1:16; 2:9; Eph 1:8; 1 Tim 2:7; 2 Tim 4:17). The word πᾶς (all)¹³¹ may have a

¹²⁷Such instances are numerous, in which faith and obedience occur in parallel statements, e.g., Rom 1:8 and 15:18; 16:19; 10:16a and 10:16b; and 11:23 and 11:30, 31.

¹²⁸Davis, *Faith and Obedience in Romans*, 30. Contra Garlington, *The Obedience of Faith*, 10-31. For a critique of Garlington's view, see Seifrid, *Christ, Our Righteousness*, 135-36, especially n. 18.

¹²⁹Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 52. See also O'Brien, *Gospel and Mission*, 60; Schreiner, *Romans*, 35.

¹³⁰Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 53.

¹³¹Πᾶς is a very significant word for Paul. Of the 1,226 NT occurrences of the word, Paul employs it 460 times (i.e., more than one third of the NT). See Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 51 n. 80.

particular emphasis to indicate the largeness of Paul's vision,¹³² or the universal dimension of his mission.¹³³ It is important to note that, in the prescript (vv. 1-7), Paul explicates the gospel that he was called to preach to the gentiles, drawing heavily on Jewish concepts.¹³⁴ All gentiles, that is, all non-Jews, along with Jews are called to obey the gospel that Paul is called to proclaim. In other words, Paul is committed to include every people group, or ethnic entity, or nation in his mission as part of God's covenantal promises in the OT (e.g., Gen 12:3; Isa 19:18-25; 49:6; Dan 7:14, 27). That is being realized partially when Paul fulfills the preaching of the gospel from Jerusalem and all the way around to Illyricum (15:18-19). Now his focus is preaching the gospel among the rest of the nations.

The third prepositional phrase conveys the *ultimate focus* of Paul's universal mission, ὑπὲρ τοῦ ὀνόματος αὐτοῦ (for the sake of His name). The "name" is clearly a reference to Jesus Christ, his Lord.¹³⁵ This name has given Paul a reason (ὑπὲρ, for the sake of) to obey the divine commission for preaching the gospel to all nations. Ultimately, Paul's mission to the gentiles is not for his personal benefit, or even for the conversion of all gentiles, but for the proclamation and the glory of Jesus Christ, his Lord.

It is correctly pointed out that, in verse 5, Paul refers to his apostolic

¹³²Ibid.

¹³³John Paul Heil, *Paul's Letter to the Romans: A Reader-Response Commentary* (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), 16; Schreiner, *Romans*, 34.

¹³⁴E.g., "servant," "called," "gospel" (v. 1); "promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures" (v. 2); concerning His Son, "who was descended from David" (v. 3); "grace" (v. 5), etc.

¹³⁵The possessive pronoun αὐτοῦ is the antecedent of Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν in v. 4b.

commission to the gentiles in general terms (ἐν πᾶσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν).¹³⁶ In verses 6-7, he places his readers, the Roman Christians, under the scheme of his apostolic commission and gospel preaching due to the fact that they are also among the nations that have been called by Jesus Christ. Citing Godet's comment on the phrase ἐν οἷς ἐστε καὶ ὑμεῖς (among whom are you also), Moo reminds the purpose of this phrase is "to show the Roman Christians that they belong within the sphere of Paul's apostolic commission. Paul is sent to 'all the Gentiles,' the Romans are 'among' the gentiles. They are thereby subject to his authority."¹³⁷ God called both him and the Roman believers to mission. Paul is not just attempting to have them support his mission, but to be his partners in mission. Because Paul did not establish the Roman church, this explains the reason that he writes to the Romans and implores their support for his mission in the West.

Summary

The prescript of Romans, therefore, provides important clues to the purpose of Paul's writing the letter as a whole. Going beyond the conventional epistolary style, Paul highlights his divine apostolic commission and authority for preaching the gospel of God. He is the first person specifically "called" by the risen Christ to be an apostle to the gentiles. He shares with the Roman believers the conviction that God's Son, Jesus Christ, is the heart of the gospel. He was promised long before in the Scriptures. He was born in the flesh and died for all, but exalted through the resurrection to the Lord of all. This was the gospel that Paul was called to preach for bringing about the obedience of faith among

¹³⁶Schreiner, *Romans*, 36.

¹³⁷Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 53. See also Das, *Solving the Romans Debate*, 57; Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 24.

all nations of the world, as well as among his readers, the Roman Christians. To this common cause, he solicits their support and partnership for the advancement of his worldwide missionary work.

The Thanksgiving and Prayer (1:8-17)

The common theme of Paul's divine apostolic commission of preaching the gospel to the gentiles—among whom his readers, the Roman Christians, are also included—holds the prescript and the thanksgiving section together. In the previous section, he has already established a bond between himself and his readers. Paul accentuates this relationship further by thanking them for their faith in the same gospel that he has been called to preach and by praying for them. Paul does this so that his visit would mutually strengthen them and that his gospel preaching would produce some fruit among them and others not yet included with them. His calling as the apostle to the gentiles compelled him to preach the gospel to everyone, without any exclusions (vv. 14-15). As a result, thanksgiving and prayer sections continue the same purpose Paul has in the prescript. Expressions of thanksgiving and petition to the gods constitute a common form and the second main section of contemporary Hellenistic letters.¹³⁸ Paul has acclimatized himself to this form in his letters for his own purposes.¹³⁹ Normally, his letters contained a thanksgiving and, often, a prayer for his readers because these two go together. When it is compared with other Pauline letters, Romans deliberately changes its

¹³⁸Doty, *Letters in Primitive Christianity*, 31-33.

¹³⁹Cf., Schubert, *The Form and Function of the Pauline Thanksgiving*; P. T. O'Brien, "Thanksgiving and the Gospel in Paul," 144-55; idem, *Introductory Thanksgivings in the Letters of Paul*, NovTSup 49 (Leiden: Brill, 1977). For a detailed comparative study of thanksgivings in Pauline letters, see Jervis, *The Purpose of Romans*, 86-101.

usual form and the content of thanksgiving.¹⁴⁰ The thanksgiving and prayer section of the letter to the Romans contains several distinctive features for stressing the common goal that Paul already made clear in the prescript. Paul's objective draws his readers' attention to his divine apostolic commission for preaching the gospel to all nations, including the Roman Christians.¹⁴¹ According to verse 15, he indeed feels an apostolic obligation to preach the gospel not only to all gentiles, but to those living in Rome, as well.

Paul Thanks God for the Faith of the Romans Known throughout the World (v. 8). Paul begins his thanksgiving in verse 8 but unusually abridged to one verse. He opens the thanksgiving with the regular principal verb εὐχαριστῶ, which is directed to its personal object, *my* God (τῷ θεῷ μου).¹⁴² Paul seldom uses this expression. It underlines a personal relation to God, and such language is found quite frequently in the Psalms.¹⁴³ He offers his thanksgiving *through* Jesus Christ (διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ). This prepositional phrase—in the thanksgiving section of Romans—is unusual.¹⁴⁴ Paul might

¹⁴⁰For details, see O'Brien, *Introductory Thanksgivings*, 197-99; Weima, "Preaching the Gospel in Rome," 346-47.

¹⁴¹So Jervis (*The Purpose of Romans*, 107) points out, "The content of this two-part unit is largely concerned with emphasizing Paul's apostolic role (διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ) and his commission to preach the gospel (v. 9b)."

¹⁴²Also, Phil 1:3; Phlm 4; 1 Cor 1:4 (not found in some manuscripts); other than the thanksgiving period in 2 Cor 12:21; Phil 4:19. Although elsewhere Paul directed his thanksgiving to the same God, He is described as τῷ θεῷ πατρὶ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, e.g., Col 1:3.

¹⁴³Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 56; O'Brien, *Introductory Thanksgivings*, 203. He further remarks that "the One thanked for the faith of the Romans is the God of the psalmists, known to Paul as Father" (204). The phrase "my God" appears more than 60 times in Psalms, besides numerous phrases that refer to God, e.g., "my Shepherd," "my Rock," "my Fortress," "my Salvation," "my Redeemer," "my Shield," "my Defender," "my Refuge," "my Strength," etc.

¹⁴⁴O'Brien (*Introductory Thanksgivings*, 204) points out that in the Pauline introductory thanksgiving, this formula appears only in Romans.

have used it to focus on his relationship to Christ, rather than on his action of praying.¹⁴⁵ Alternatively, he was alluding to his apostolic status because this prepositional phrase echoes the words of verse 5, in which Paul claims that it is “through him,” that is, through Jesus Christ, that he has received his apostleship.¹⁴⁶ The following phrases of thanksgiving signify Paul’s emphasis on the universality of his mission that corresponds to his apostolic commission (1:5, 14-15). For this reason, the usage of πάντων in the pronominal object phrase περὶ πάντων ὑμῶν suggests inclusion of both Jews and gentiles in the scope of his mission, even though gentiles form the majority in Rome.¹⁴⁷ The focus of the universality of his mission is additionally indicated in the rationale for thanksgiving, which is expressed by the causal ὅτι-clause, “because (ὅτι) your faith is being proclaimed in the whole world” (cf. Rom 16:19: “Your obedience has reached to all”). The faith of the Roman Christians (ἡ πίστις ὑμῶν) was that reason for thanksgiving. Perhaps Paul could take it for granted that the Romans concur with him in matters of faith.¹⁴⁸ The final two terms—namely, καταγγέλλω (proclaim, which is used only of the gospel and its elements),¹⁴⁹ and ἐν ὅλῳ τῷ κόσμῳ in this sentence—directly reflect

¹⁴⁵Jervis, *The Purpose of Romans*, 102.

¹⁴⁶Ibid., 107 n. 3.

¹⁴⁷O’Brien, *Introductory Thanksgivings*, 206. Schreiner, *Romans*, 49. O’Brien further observes that πάντων corresponds to πᾶσιν of the benediction or wish-prayer (the apostle wanted God’s grace and peace to be upon all God’s beloved ones in Rome (v. 7); and possibly to the words of verse 5, in which the universality of Paul’s commission is emphasized (ἐλάβομεν χάριν καὶ ἀποστολὴν εἰς ὑπακοὴν πίστεως ἐν πᾶσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν), 206-07.

¹⁴⁸Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 56; O’Neil (*Paul’s Letter to the Romans*, 48) comments “The opening thanksgiving for their faith is a sign that he can assume agreement about the fundamentals: the saints in Rome, as everywhere, live by faith.”

¹⁴⁹In NT apostolic preaching, especially in Acts and Paul, this term is used for proclaiming the gospel (1 Cor 9:14), the resurrection of Jesus Christ (Acts 4:2), the Word of God (Acts 13:5), forgiveness

mission language. A number of Pauline interpreters understand the phrase ἐν ὅλῳ τῷ κόσμῳ as an instance of ‘hyperbole.’¹⁵⁰ Although Schreiner thinks the expression is an example of hyperbole, he maintains that the news of the conversion of the Romans “in the whole world” points toward the missionary concern of Paul.¹⁵¹ Similarly, Schweizer thinks that the phrase ἐν ὅλῳ τῷ κόσμῳ may seem to be an exaggeration, but it “shows how the cosmic dimension is continually in the foreground when the proclamation of the gospel is in question.”¹⁵² O’Brien correctly understands that the expression ἐν ὅλῳ τῷ κόσμῳ is “not to be understood as mere flattery on the one hand, or meaningless exaggeration on the other. Indeed, even the word ‘hyperbole’ ought to be used with caution.”¹⁵³ For he thinks that “Paul did not mean the whole world distributively, that is, every person under heaven, had heard of the faith of the Roman Christians. He had particularly in mind those places where Christianity had been established.”¹⁵⁴ The statement clearly expresses the world-wide mission, which is at the forefront in Paul’s understanding of mission.

of sins (Acts 13:38), the way of salvation (Acts 16:17), the mystery of God (1 Cor 2:1), the Lord’s death (1 Cor 11:26), and Christ (Phil 1:18; Acts 17:3).

¹⁵⁰The expression, which means exaggeration, was first used by Heinrich A. W. Meyer, *Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Epistle to the Romans* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1873), 1:57. See also Godet, *Commentary on Romans*, 142; R. J. Parry, *The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1921), 37; A. M. Hunter, *The Epistle to the Romans* (London: SCM, 1955), 27; Leenhardt, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 42.

¹⁵¹Schreiner, *Romans*, 49.

¹⁵²Eduard Schweizer, “The Church as the Missionary Body of Christ,” in *Neotestamentica: Deutsche und Englische Aufsätze 1951-1963*, ed. Eduard Schweizer (Zürich: Zwingli, 1963), 318.

¹⁵³O’Brien, *Introductory Thanksgivings*, 207-08.

¹⁵⁴Ibid. Similarly, Schreiner, *Romans*, 49.

Paul Prays for the Service of the Gospel to the Romans and the Gentiles

(vv. 9-13). In the following verses (9-13), Paul further connects this very purpose in his prayer to visit Rome with “for.”¹⁵⁵ This prayer of thanksgiving begins not merely with remembrance of his readers in his prayers as in other letters, but rather with the oath that “God is my witness” (μάρτυς γάρ μου ἐστὶν ὁ θεός, cf. 2 Cor 1:23; Phil 1:8; 1 Thess 2:5) to solemnly prove his “apostolic responsibility”¹⁵⁶ for the Roman Christians, although he did not found the church. The subsequent relative clauses make it evident that Paul prayed regularly for an opportunity to visit them, and that he has a genuine interest in their faith and spiritual growth. Paul additionally defends his apostolic responsibility that involves “the preaching of the gospel” besides the prayer of thanksgiving. This is reinforced by the parenthetical remark in verse 9: For God, “whom I serve in my spirit in the gospel of His Son.” Paul’s service should not be considered as limited to prayer,¹⁵⁷ because the expression λατρεύω ἐν τῷ πνεύματι μου is used in a broader sense to indicate Paul’s sincerity and the wholeheartedness of that service (λατρεύω) in the gospel, to which he is called.¹⁵⁸ The emphasis is on “the gospel of his [God’s] Son,” which points out that the sphere of Paul’s service is described by the prepositional phrase ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ. In the immediate context, gospel (τὸ εὐαγγέλιον) is understood

¹⁵⁵Those who omit this word (e.g., NIV, NAB, NJV, NLT), or the commentators who bypass or do not closely connect with v. 8, are not correct. “This is a mistake,” as Schreiner (*Romans*, 49) asserts, “since the γάρ signals that Paul’s prayer of thanksgiving is an *apostolic* thanksgiving, in which Paul thanks God for the extension of the gospel to Rome.”

¹⁵⁶Weima, “Preaching the Gospel in Rome,” 348. This has been ascertained as well by G. P. Wiles, *Paul’s Intercessory Prayers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974), 190.

¹⁵⁷Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 1:76.

¹⁵⁸So Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 58; Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 58; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 244-45; Schreiner, *Romans*, 51.

as an activity of preaching the good news (εὐαγγελίζεσθαι),¹⁵⁹ the content of which is God's Son, Jesus Christ. This clearly recalls verse 3 of the prescript, in which Paul underlines his divine commission as an apostle to preach the gospel. This cultic focus of Paul's service in the gospel is reinforced in Romans 15:16, in which he describes his apostolic ministry to the gentiles in cultic and priestly terms. This calls attention to Paul's apostolic commission, with which the preaching of the gospel is intimately connected. Therefore, the parenthesis of the verse 9 is quite significant because it makes plain that Paul's thanksgiving and desire to visit them are in his service of preaching the gospel as an apostle to the gentiles.¹⁶⁰

The importance of Paul's desire to visit Rome, for the service of the gospel as an apostle is confirmed by a long prayer request (vv. 11-15). In this prayer within the thanksgiving section, the apostle clarified that his desire to visit the Roman Christians is merely the initial part of a larger, twofold purpose.¹⁶¹ The first objective of Paul's visit to Rome is pastoral in nature because he writes "that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you" (vv. 11-12). The "spiritual gift"¹⁶² is a literal translation of the Greek phrase χάρισμα πνευματικόν, which Paul never uses in this combination anywhere else in his letters. Its meaning seems to be uncertain. Consequently, for some, the usage of the

¹⁵⁹Friedrich, "εὐαγγέλιον," 729; BDAG, 402; O'Brien, *Introductory Thanksgivings*, 213; Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 58. Contra Morris (*The Epistle to the Romans*, 58), who does not think its use here is an activity, as he writes that "not in preaching the gospel, he [Paul] says nothing about preaching, but simply that he serves in his spirit in the gospel."

¹⁶⁰Schreiner, *Romans*, 51.

¹⁶¹Weima, "Preaching the Gospel in Rome," 349.

¹⁶²Paul elsewhere uses χάρισμα simply to denote "gift" or a list of gifts, e.g., Rom 12:6-8; 1 Cor 12: 4-11; Eph 4:11; 1 Tim 4:14; 2 Tim 1:6. Cf. BDAG, 1081.

indefinite pronoun $\tau\iota$ ¹⁶³ makes it difficult to think that he has in mind any specific gift, a special gift, or a list of gifts.¹⁶⁴ Nor does Paul use the phrase to mean “spiritual blessings or benefit,” which he hopes will result from his ministry in Rome,¹⁶⁵ or “an insight or ability, given Paul by the Spirit that he hopes to ‘share’ with the Romans.”¹⁶⁶ The pronoun $\tau\iota$ may indicate indefiniteness but not without importance (e.g., Rom 1:13; Acts 18:23; 1 Cor 16:7; Gal 2:6). In numerous instances, it could refer to something specific¹⁶⁷ as the subsequent phrases and the purpose of the “spiritual gift” would indicate, that is, to “strengthen” the Roman believers. Paul has in mind God to perform the act of “strengthening” ($\epsilon\iota\varsigma\ \tau\omicron\ \sigma\tau\eta\rho\iota\chi\theta\eta\tilde{\nu}\alpha\iota$, notice the divine passive infinitive) the Roman Christians. He will just be an agent to share spiritual gifts with them¹⁶⁸ because elsewhere he utilizes this word ($\sigma\tau\eta\rho\iota\zeta\omega$) in his epistles (e.g., 1 Thess 3:13; 2 Thess 2:17; 3:3).

The doxology of the letter closing furnishes the clue in reference to this fact. According to Paul in 16:25: “Now to him who [God] is able to strengthen ($\sigma\tau\eta\rho\iota\zeta\omega$, note the active verb) you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ” Hence, “spiritual gift” means the gospel ($\tau\omicron\ \epsilon\upsilon\alpha\gamma\gamma\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\iota\omicron\nu\ \mu\omicron\upsilon$) and the preaching of Jesus Christ ($\tau\omicron\ \kappa\acute{\eta}\rho\upsilon\gamma\mu\alpha\ \text{'}\text{Ιησο\text{'}\text{ϋ Χριστο\text{'}\text{ϋ}}$), whom God will use for strengthening the faith of the

¹⁶³The word is variously translated as *some, someone, any, anyone, a certain, and a(n)*, and used either as a substantive or as an adjective. For a detailed use of the term, see BDAG, 1007-09; Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, 741-44; BDF, 301.

¹⁶⁴So Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 60. But some think a similar kind of gift that Paul mentioned elsewhere in his letters, e.g., Sanday and Headlam, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 21; Barrett, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 25.

¹⁶⁵E.g., Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 1: 79; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 248.

¹⁶⁶E.g., Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 60.

¹⁶⁷E.g., Acts 18:7; Rom 3:8; 1 Cor 4:18; 15:34; 2 Cor 3:1. See BDAG, 1008.

¹⁶⁸O’Brien, *Introductory Thanksgivings*, 221.

Roman Christians.¹⁶⁹ This is the same gospel (1:1) that Paul was called to preach to the nations. His gospel is the inclusive gospel, which does not discriminate against anyone (1:14-16). Strengthening them does not indicate Roman believers' weak faith due to the lack of an apostolic foundation (cf. 1:8; 15:14), as some scholars believe.¹⁷⁰ Instead, Paul hopes that, by sharing this understanding of his gospel with them, God will make them stronger for the cause of the gospel and support for his new mission field in Spain.

Besides this, as the apostle to the gentiles, Paul's primary purpose is to engage in active missionary work of the same gospel (vv. 13-15)—both among the Roman Christians and all the gentile people—because he intended “to have some harvest among you as well as among the rest of the gentiles” (v.13), and “to preach the gospel also to you who are in Rome” (vv. 14-15).¹⁷¹ Paul's reference “to have some harvest among you as well as *among the rest of the gentiles*” (v. 13), more literally “among the other nations,”¹⁷² does not indicate his preaching of the gospel among *you* (a reference to v. 7 – “beloved in Rome . . . saints,” and v.12 – people of “faith”) to the Roman Christians only.

¹⁶⁹For a similar conclusion, see Paul Bowers, “Fulfilling the Gospel: Fulfilling the Pauline Mission,” *JETS* 30 (1987): 185-98; G. D. Fee, *God's Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 487-88; Schreiner, *Romans*, 54; Osborne, *Romans*, 36-37. They correctly arrived at this conclusion, but failed to see the connection between 1:11 and 16:25.

¹⁷⁰See Mark Nanos, *The Mystery of Romans: The Jewish Context of Paul's Letter* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 239.

¹⁷¹Weima (“Preaching the Gospel in Rome,” 349) observes a progressive approach to the purpose statements of the three clauses in v. 11 (“impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you”); v. 13 (“to have some harvest among you as well as among the rest of the gentiles”); and vv. 14-15 (“to preach the gospel also to you who are in Rome”). Weima contends that “the last of the three clauses makes clear, Paul's primary purpose in wanting to come to Rome is to preach the gospel to them.” In addition, he notes the same approach in the use of the indefinite pronoun “some” in the first and the second clauses (vv. 11 and 13) but, in the third clause (vv. 14-15), it disappears as Paul desires “to preach the gospel also to you who are in Rome” (vv. 14-15). For this reason, Weima attested, “When the purpose statements of the first two clauses are interpreted in light of the third, then it appears that Paul's veiled references to imparting ‘some spiritual gift’ and having ‘some fruit’ among them already have in view his desire to preach the gospel to the believers in Rome.” (Ibid., 350.)

¹⁷²Newman and Nida, *A Translator's Handbook*, 18.

Furthermore, it indicates Paul's preaching among the rest of the gentile people of the world, including Romans (who belong to one of the gentile communities), because all Romans are not yet fully evangelized or had become Christians.¹⁷³ He envisages his policy of preaching the gospel in a new area, as in 15:20. His use of "some harvest" (literally, "fruits" is an agricultural term) may be interpreted as his desire for strengthening the faith of the Roman Christians, and additionally for winning new converts from among the rest of gentiles in response to his preaching the gospel.¹⁷⁴ As a result, Paul's missionary purpose is twofold: On the one hand, as the apostle to the gentiles, he yearns to evangelize all non-Christians or to win new converts from among the rest of the gentile people (i.e., the task of evangelism). On the other hand, Paul wants to nurture and strengthen the Roman Christians, (i.e., the task of discipleship)¹⁷⁵ because he has already completed such evangelistic tasks in the East (15:19). Moreover, it is certain that every gentile (and every Jew) in Rome was not converted or added to the church as the following verses and the letter body indicate, although Paul has already recognized that the Roman Christians' genuine faith is well-known to the entire world

¹⁷³Cf. Das, *Solving the Romans Debate*, 60. For him "the rest" of the gentiles refers in relation to his Roman audience only. Contra Runar Thorsteinsson ("Paul's Missionary Duty toward Gentiles in Rome: A Note on the Punctuation and Syntax of Rom 1:13-15," *NTS* 48 [2002]: 531-47). Through his rereading of the text, he demonstrated that "the rest of the gentiles" in v. 13 means the paired groups of "Greek and barbarians" and the "wise and foolish" of v. 14—not the Romans.

¹⁷⁴Bowers, "Fulfilling the Gospel," 195-96; Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 61; Schreiner, *Romans*, 54. However, Krugar suggests that "some fruits" refers to Paul's collection for the poor in Jerusalem. See M.A. Krugar, "Tina Karpon, 'Some Fruit,' in Romans 1:13," *WTJ* 49 (1987): 168-70. But, it is unlikely since Paul is just reporting this collection in 15:25-27, not asking for contributions from them, because he already had taken the collection to Jerusalem on his way to Rome (Osborne, *Romans*, 38).

¹⁷⁵E.g., see 1 Cor 9:15-18; Gal 1:8-9; 4:13. Similarly, Schreiner (*Romans*, 54) asserts that preaching the gospel involves both initial evangelism and the strengthening of existing believers. So Bowers, "Fulfilling the Gospel," 196; O'Brien, *Gospel and Mission*, 62-63; Seifrid, *Justification by Faith*, 189; Osborne, *Romans*, 38.

(1:8). So, as the apostle to the gentiles, Paul wants the Roman Christians to grasp his divinely commissioned gospel, which he was called to preach to all gentiles.

Paul's Obligation and Readiness to Preach the Gospel to All the Nations and in Rome (vv. 14-15). Paul's deep concern for preaching the gospel to the gentiles is more evident in verse 14: "I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish." He obviously, does not include Jews in these categories. Paul expands on "the rest of gentiles" of the previous verse by calling them "Greeks and barbarians (*Ἑλλῆσίν τε καὶ βαρβάρους*)" or "the wise and the foolish (*σοφοῖς τε καὶ ἀνοήτοις*)," ¹⁷⁶ representing the totality of the peoples of the nations ¹⁷⁷ or including all humanity. ¹⁷⁸ It is possible that "Greeks and barbarians" may be understood as the NIV puts it, *Greeks and non-Greeks*, and thus the totality of mankind. ¹⁷⁹ Therefore, it is for all people of the world that Paul is obligated to preach the gospel. He makes a similar assertion in 1 Corinthians 9:16b: "For necessity is laid upon me. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!" Paul was deeply conscious of his divine commission, as the apostle to

¹⁷⁶In the Greco-Roman world, *Ἑλλῆσίν* would refer to those people who spoke the Greek language and had adopted Greek culture. The *βαρβάρους* were people who did not speak Greek and who lacked culture. Due to the fact that Greek philosophy and culture spread among peoples of the Greco-Roman world, Greek also came to mean "wise" and "cultured" people, and the barbarian to mean "ignorant" and "uneducated." In Addition, the Romans were educated and cultured; they were, perhaps, included among the *Ἑλλῆσίν*. Thus, each pair is essentially synonymous with the other (see Moo, *The Epistle to Romans*, 61), or probably another way of designating the Greek –barbarian split (Schreiner, *Romans*, 56). Contra Fitzmyer (*Romans*, 251), who does not assume that each pair is identical with the other. For him, the first pair portrays the gentiles, and the second is a depiction of all humanity. According to him, "Paul moves from a restricted group to a larger one." It is doubtful whether Paul, being a Jew, had such distinction, in his mind.

¹⁷⁷Barnett, *Romans*, 35.

¹⁷⁸Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 61.

¹⁷⁹Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 64.

the gentiles because he was being “set apart for the gospel of God.” Paul is possibly referring to his divine call to apostleship on the Damascus road.¹⁸⁰ He is obligated to Christ, because He had died for him, and so becomes a debtor (ὀφειλέτης) to Him. This sense of debt to Christ was transformed into a debt to those whom Christ wished to bring to salvation.¹⁸¹ In fact, Paul—as the apostle to the gentiles—reiterates in this verse that the gospel he has been called to preach is for all people. He is under obligation to preach the gospel universally. He does not make any distinction when he preaches the gospel. He is both a debtor to the believers (1:6), and as well as unbelievers (Greeks and barbarians, including Romans) with a view to converting them, and as well as eager to preach the gospel to the Roman Christians (to whom he writes) for building up and grounding them firmly in the faith. “I am eager ‘to preach the gospel’ (εὐαγγελίσασθαι)¹⁸² to you also who are in Rome” (Rom 1:15) is part of his larger missionary purpose. Does verse 15, though, indicate Paul’s eagerness to preach the gospel in Rome to believers alone? It is feasible that Paul’s readiness was not simply for preaching the gospel to believers (vv. 6-13), because there were undoubtedly numerous gentiles or non-Christians in the city of Rome and its environs, as his obligation to the “Greeks and barbarians (non-Greeks)” in verse 14 suggests. Verses 16-17 offer the clue not only of its connection to verse 15, but Paul’s scope of preaching the gospel in Rome, too.

¹⁸⁰G. D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 418-19.

¹⁸¹O’Brien, *Gospel and Mission*, 61.

¹⁸²So Barrett, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 26. O’Brien has demonstrated that the word εὐαγγελίζω has a wide range of activities, which is not limited to initial or primary evangelism (see *Gospel and Mission*, 62-63). It was also addressed to the Christians (v.15; cf. 11:1; 1 Cor 9:9-12; Gal 4:13; 2 Tim 4:5). The same gospel is proclaimed in both missionary and congregational preaching. Consequently, he makes no distinction. See G. Friedrich, “εὐαγγελίζομαι,” in *TDNT* 2:719-20; BDAG, 402.

At first glance, it contradicts Paul's custom of not building on another's foundation where Christ has already been preached (15:20). It appears that a tension certainly exists between chapters 1 and 15, which many commentators have long held, as some consider this as Paul's strict rule of law.¹⁸³ These, however, are merely general statements, which are not intended as a definitive rule of law for his mission. Rather, they indicate his strong desire: "I make it my ambition" (15:20).¹⁸⁴ Similarly, Cranfield maintains, "There is no suggestion that he felt himself under an absolute obligation to refrain from ever visiting a church which had been founded by someone else."¹⁸⁵ Paul undoubtedly wants to engage in the initial proclamation of the gospel for winning new converts while in Rome, but not to engage in establishing a new church such as he does elsewhere.¹⁸⁶ As the apostle to the gentiles, he is eager to use every opportunity to obtain new converts because it is highly unlikely that all people in Rome either were converted or had heard the gospel. Paul's intentions are creating a missionary base among the Roman Christians and garnering support for his mission in the West.

The Gospel Is the Power of God for the Salvation of All (vv. 16-17).

Scholars have been debating whether these verses conclude the Romans thanksgiving or

¹⁸³E.g., JB translates, "I have made it an unbroken rule . . ." For Käsemann it has reference to Pauline 'canon,' according to which his task is only to work as a missionary where others have not yet come" (*Commentary on Romans*, 395). No prohibitive 'canon' is in view, but his chief aim guides the overall direction of his mission. Bowers further notes, "The negative is attached not to the infinitive 'to proclaim' (εὐαγγελίζεσθαι) but to the adverb 'where' (οὐχ ὅπου). Paul does not say, 'My ambition is not to proclaim, where Christ has been named,' but 'My ambition is to proclaim not where Christ has been named.'" It is a matter not of prohibiting where he will preach but of selecting where, a matter of strategic choices" (Bowers, "Fulfilling the Gospel," 197).

¹⁸⁴Bowers, "Fulfilling the Gospel," 196 n. 24; Barnett, *Romans*, 35.

¹⁸⁵Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans*, I: 764-65.

¹⁸⁶Schreiner, *Romans*, 55.

include the letter body opening.¹⁸⁷ Some interpreters identify the phrase οὐ θέλω δὲ ὑμᾶς ἀγνοεῖν, ἀδελφοί, (in verse 13a) as the “disclosure formula” of the letter body opening of Romans. Hence, the verse 12 closes the Romans thanksgiving.¹⁸⁸ Others recognize that verse 16 provides an appropriate letter body opening, so verse 15 closes the Romans thanksgiving.¹⁸⁹ Moo and others think that these verses are technically connected to the letter opening, but the theme makes an appropriate transition to the body.¹⁹⁰ In these two verses, Barrett finds at once the continuation of verses 8-15, and the beginning of verses 18-32. For this reason, he recommends considering them as a separate paragraph.¹⁹¹

In these verses, though, Paul continues with the theme of “the gospel” because he writes, “I am not ashamed of the gospel” (v. 16a), and in it (the gospel) “the righteousness of God is revealed” (v. 17a). In fact, Paul is rounding off his references to the theme “gospel” or “preaching the gospel,” which he first introduced in his opening sentence of the prescript and reintroduced in verses 9 and 15. This makes verses 1-17 a unit, in which the dominant idea is “the gospel,” which he had earlier explained in such detail (vv. 2-3).¹⁹²

Now Paul is prepared to expound more concerning the gospel’s theo-logical basis for its missionary proclamation (see chapter 3) and its implications for both to the

¹⁸⁷For a detailed survey, see Jervis, *The Purpose of Romans*, 104-07.

¹⁸⁸E.g., Sanders, “The Transition from Opening Epistolary,” 360; Funk, *Language, Hermeneutics*, 264; Robert Jewett, “Romans as an Ambassadorial Letter,” *Int* 36 (1982): 12-13.

¹⁸⁹E.g., Olson, “Epistolary Uses of Expressions of Self-Confidence,” 590; Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 27; J. A. Ziesler, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans*, TPINTC (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1989), 35; Jervis, *The Purpose of Romans*, 107.

¹⁹⁰Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 64.

¹⁹¹Barrett, *Romans*, 27.

¹⁹²Burnett, *Romans*, 37.

Romans and the gentile world. As a result, Gordon Fee has noted that these verses syntactically belong to the prayer and thanksgiving section.¹⁹³ Verse 16 is introduced by “for” (γάρ), which links what follows with what precedes it and further connected together motivates Paul to preach the gospel without feeling shame.¹⁹⁴ According to Garlington, Romans 1:1-7 is paralleled by 1:16-17 due to their common ideas: for example, Jew/gentile, the gospel, faith, obedience/ righteousness, and power.¹⁹⁵ Characteristically, a Pauline thanksgiving closes with what Schubert called an “eschatological climax.” Although such climax cannot be strictly identified in the case of Romans’ thanksgiving, Schubert has contended that ideas—like εὐαγγέλιον, σωτηρία, δικαιοσύνη, and ἀποκαλύπτεται in verses 16-17—have eschatological significance. Hence, this gives reason for Schubert and others to consider verses 16-17 as the closing of the Romans’ thanksgiving.¹⁹⁶ Achtemeier defended the continuation of the thanksgiving and prayer through verses 16-17 because he thinks that these verses are grammatically subordinate to the previous section.¹⁹⁷ Grammatical subordination is

¹⁹³See Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence*, 477 n. 12.

¹⁹⁴Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 66. Contra Schreiner (*Romans*, 58), who does not see this connection beyond v. 15, because he thinks that the γάρ in v. 16 does not connect with v. 14. Instead, it connects vv. 15 and 16.

¹⁹⁵D. B. Garlington, “The Obedience of Faith in the Letter to the Romans, Part II: The Obedience of Faith and Judgment by Works,” *WTJ* 53 (1991): 49. Heil has convincingly demonstrated, specifically through a diagram, that there are significant relationships with each one of Paul’s viewpoints in Rom 1:1-17. See John Paul Heil, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans*, 14-22.

¹⁹⁶Schubert, *Form and Function of the Pauline Thanksgiving*, 33. So O’Brien, *Introductory Thanksgivings*, 200-02.

¹⁹⁷Achtemeier, *Romans*, 1: 35-37. also seems to agree with Achtemeier, while Dunn (*Romans* 1-8, 38), Moo (*The Epistle to the Romans*, 64), and others differ in their perspective because they see the centrality of the subject matter emphasized in these verses. Though Schreiner (*Romans*, 58-59) admits the validity of Achtemeier’s view, he additionally draws attention to the thematic centrality of the verses (so also Andrew Das [*Solving the Romans Debate*, 54]) for he thinks that Paul’s desire to preach the gospel, which is the saving power of God, is closely tied to the content of his gospel as it is expounded in the rest of the epistle.

obvious, yet the mission word “gospel” in verses 16-17 plays a central role, which not only closely connects the letter opening (1:1, 9, 15), but the letter body (2:16; 10:15, 16; 11:28) and closing (15:16, 19, 20; 16:25), as well.

Paul’s most profound definition of the theo-logy of his gospel is found in these two verses: that is, his worldwide-mission theo-logy. Paul earlier provided a solid foundation for this gospel, which he was called to preach to the nations. In addition, Paul wants to furnish a rationale behind his deep confidence in the same gospel with which, he was entrusted, because he is not ashamed to proclaim it. Paul has attested to the fact that he is prepared to confess the gospel openly and to bear witness to its saving power. His statement, “I am not ashamed of the gospel,” however, seems less surprising. Why should he think it necessary to express his denial of such feelings of being ashamed of the gospel? Was there any reason for Paul to be ashamed when he has already expressed his pride in the gospel on numerous occasions (Gal 6:14; Phil 3:7; cf. Rom 15:17)? Scholars have been debating the understanding of Paul’s use of οὐ ἐπαισχύνομαι (I am not ashamed). Many interpreters of Romans have understood the word in a psychological sense,¹⁹⁸ while others consider it to be in confessional terms.¹⁹⁹ Still others recognize it as Paul’s response to an allegation against his gospel, which is antinomian or anti-Jewish.²⁰⁰ It will be difficult, and therefore unconvincing, however, to establish such a view.

Paul’s willingness to be “unashamed” (οὐ ἐπαισχύνομαι) to confess the gospel

¹⁹⁸So Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 1: 86-87. Even though one cannot deny the psychological aspect of the word ἐπαισχύνομαι, reading it purely in a psychological sense could be misleading. So Seifrid, *Justification by Faith*, 212; Schreiner, *Romans*, 60.

¹⁹⁹So Seifrid, *Justification by Faith*, 212. Contra Moo (*The Epistle to the Romans*, 66 n. 11), who is unconvinced for the evidence of confessional meaning.

²⁰⁰So K. Grayston, “‘Not Ashamed of the Gospel,’ Romans 1:16a and the Structure of the Epistle,” *SE I*, Part 1 (1964): 569-73.

to both Jews and non-Jews echoes his firm standing and trust in biblical truth, as in Isaiah 28:16 (ὁ πιστεύων ἐπ’ αὐτῷ οὐ μὴ κατασχυνθῇ, LXX), cited in Romans 9:33 and 10:11 (see also 1 Pet 2:6),²⁰¹ and moreover in Psalms²⁰² (e.g., “I will also speak of your testimonies before kings and shall not be ashamed” [Ps 119:46]).²⁰³ In the context of suffering, Paul tells Timothy not to be ashamed of the testimony either of the Lord (2 Tim 1:8) or of Paul’s imprisonment for the sake of the gospel (2 Tim 1:12). Furthermore, he confesses not being ashamed of his own suffering, for fear of suffering can lead to being ashamed of the gospel. Jesus warned His disciples that those who are ashamed to confess Him, fear for their lives. (See also Luke 9:26; cf. Matt 10:32; Luke 12:8.) Consequently, scriptural evidence from both the OT and NT demonstrates that the phrase οὐ ἐπαισχύνομαι reflects both confessional and psychological elements.²⁰⁴

Certainly, Paul is aware of some people in Rome who will despise his gospel message about a Jewish crucified carpenter. He has already endured enough suffering and pain for preaching the gospel: imprisonment; beating; being chased out; laughed at; almost being killed; and so on and so forth (2 Cor 11:23-27). Barrett delineates that in the Pauline letters the use of ἐπαισχύνομαι word-group—preceded by the negative οὐ—in the context of Paul’s gospel preaching or missionary work shows that his apostleship and the

²⁰¹See C. K. Barrett, “I Am Not Ashamed of the Gospel,” in *New Testament Essays* (London: SPCK, 1972), 116-43; idem, “I Am Not Ashamed of the Gospel,” in *Foi et Salut Selon S. Paul (Épître aux Romains 1:16)*, 19-50, AnBib 42 (Rome: E Pontificio Instituto Biblico, 1970), 20-21.

²⁰²See Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul*, 38-39.

²⁰³LXX reads “καὶ ἐλάλουν ἐν τοῖς μαρτυρίοις σου ἐναντίον βασιλέων καὶ οὐκ ἤσχυνόμεν” (Ps 118:46).

²⁰⁴So Schreiner, *Romans*, 60.

gospel or even his life are under attack.²⁰⁵ Because the message of the gospel was foolishness to the Greeks and a stumbling block to the Jews (1 Cor 1:18-23), it may have been embarrassing to both the Jews and the gentile people of Rome, the capital of the gentile world. If Paul preaches to just the Roman Christians, there is no reason for him to be ashamed and, hence, he does not need to employ a disclaimer. In addition, Paul could have said it as a straightforward positive statement—“I am proud of the gospel” (Moffatt) or “I have complete confidence” (TEV)—as he has expressed it numerous times.

Therefore, as the apostle to the gentiles, Paul is keen to preach the gospel in Rome, mostly among the gentiles or the non-Christian Romans, besides grounding the faith of the believers as described previously. Paul, though beset by countless troubles and opposition, is not ashamed of the gospel during his missionary work regardless of his situation (1 Cor 1:27; 2:3; 2 Cor 10:8; Phil 1:20). His circumstances surely never gain control over his confidence in the gospel, for his confidence is in God, who has called and commissioned him to preach the gospel to the gentiles. Paul thus is ready to preach the gospel in Rome because (γάρ) he was not ashamed of the gospel (v. 16a). Similarly, Paul explains that he is not ashamed of the gospel because (γάρ) it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes (v. 16b). So also he affirms that the gospel is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes because (γάρ) in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith (v. 17).²⁰⁶ These verses not only

²⁰⁵Barrett, “I Am Not Ashamed of the Gospel,” in *Foi et Salut*, 45. See also Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 65-66.

²⁰⁶See Schreiner, *Romans*, 58. Chamberlain holds that the three occurrences of γάρ (for), in vv. 16 and 17, are significant: “The first instance introduces the reason for Paul’s eagerness to preach the gospel in Rome; the second, his reason for not being ashamed of the gospel; the third, the reason for the dynamic of the gospel” (William D. Chamberlain, *An Exegetical Grammar of the New Testament* [New

illustrate that the scope of Paul's gospel is universal; its effect additionally has universal significance because he describes the gospel as the power of God, which results in salvation for "everyone" (παντί) who believes (v. 16). It is open to everyone, each one, and anyone who believes (cf. Rom 3:22). Paul's meaning of παντί is made more explicit by the next phrase: ". . . to the Jew first (πρῶτον)²⁰⁷ and also for the Greek." The word Ἑλλήν (Greek) includes all gentiles or non-Jews because it is distinct from the word Ἰουδαῖος (Jew).²⁰⁸ For this reason the Jew and Greek combination includes all humankind.²⁰⁹ The phrase, in fact, summarizes "the incorporation of Gentiles within the people of God and the continuing significance of Israel."²¹⁰ Though Paul maintains the priority of the Jews' election because the gospel came to them first,²¹¹ his usage of the word καί (and), a coordinate conjunction, denotes the equality of the Jews with the gentiles in gospel privileges and grace.²¹² The gospel not only demonstrates the

York: Macmillan, 1941; reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979], 158).

²⁰⁷There is an omission of the word πρῶτον (first) from some manuscripts, namely B G g sah Tertullian Ephraem. Perhaps these were omitted by Marcion, who would have considered the priority of the Jews to be offensive. See Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (New York: United Bible Societies, 2002).

²⁰⁸H. Windisch, "Ἑλλήν," in *TDNT* 2:515.

²⁰⁹Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 68.

²¹⁰Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 65.

²¹¹So also Schreiner, *Romans*, 62. However, his conjecture on "the Jew first," indicating "his [Paul's] missionary practice of using the synagogue as a starting point for the preaching of the gospel," is highly unlikely. This is because the Jewish synagogue was the only religious place [besides that of the gentiles] before any church existed in the area. As a result, it is natural for a Jewish Christian missionary, like Paul, to look for a Jewish synagogue/community in those unknown cities in order to establish the local gentile connection in the area. Thus, Paul's use of "the Jew first" should not be interpreted from this point of view, but from his theological conviction of God's outworking of His eternal plan of salvation for all through the election of Israel, which Schreiner strongly believes, too.

²¹²The place of the Jews in salvation history is so significant for Paul, though, that he provides

“equality” of the Jews and gentiles regarding their need for salvation, but concerning their sinful nature as well. No one can escape God’s judgment in view of God’s revelation in Jesus Christ. In Romans 1:18-3:20, Paul explains the nature of sin and its consequences, and that God’s salvation is offered to everyone in the crucified and risen Jesus (3:21-31). Consequently, the gospel is for all, and there is no inequality on the basis of status, race, or nationality. Indeed, the preaching of the gospel seeks to elicit faith, and results in salvation proclaimed to all “for there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord for all” (Rom 10:12). Paul appeals to Jesus’ universal lordship for confirming that He grants His salvation to the gentiles, along with the Jews. This theme of the universality of the gospel echoes throughout the epistle.²¹³ Therefore, once the Romans comprehend the inclusion of both Jews and gentiles in God’s saving plan as it was promised in the OT, Paul hopes that they will support his plan of preaching the gospel not only in Rome, but in Spain and beyond.²¹⁴

Paul’s gospel contains not just God’s saving power for everyone, but it also reveals “the righteousness of God (δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ, v. 17).”²¹⁵ The consecutive use of the γάρ explains the reason that the gospel is the saving power of God for both the Jews and the gentiles, because in it the righteousness of God is being revealed. Although the phrase “the righteousness of God” has been variously interpreted,²¹⁶ its connection with the

further explanation of the problem of “the Jew first” in chapters. 9-11.

²¹³Rom 2:5-11; 3:22-23, 29-30; 4:16-17; 9:24; 10:11-13; 11:32; 15:9-12; 16:26

²¹⁴See Schreiner, *Romans*, 62.

²¹⁵Treatment of this theme is beyond the present scope. For a fuller treatment of this theme, see Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 69-90; Schreiner, *Romans*, 62-76; Seifrid, *Christ, Our Righteousness*, 35-67; idem, *Justification by Faith*, 211-18.

²¹⁶For various meanings and alternatives, see Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 70-73;

gospel is vital. It is in this gospel, or Christ's death and resurrection—which is the saving power of God for everyone—that “the righteousness of God” is revealed. Hence, the righteousness of God is a revealed truth, promised in the Scripture (Hab 2:4)—which was hidden for ages—but is now manifested in the gospel. Paul's use of Habakkuk 2:4 does not simply convey to its readers “the prophetic summary of the gospel” but provides scriptural evidence as well for several of the key concepts in the previous verses.²¹⁷ It is significant that “the ‘revelation of the righteousness of God’ recalls not just God's promises for the Jews, but additionally His purpose for all nations.”²¹⁸ This yet again calls to mind the themes of verses 1:1-5. The passive form of the verb (ἀποκαλύπτεται) implies that “God” is the one who has revealed His righteousness.²¹⁹ This obviously demonstrates that God is central to Paul's message and mission.

Summary

As a result, in the thanksgiving and prayer—like the prescript—Paul skillfully establishes the universal significance of the gospel, which he was called to preach to all peoples. This is the same gospel (vv. 1-5),²²⁰ which is the saving power of God for both the Jew and the nations, that Paul expounds thoroughly (1:18-11:36)—with its implications (12:1-15:13)—in the letter body. He hopes to strengthen the faith of the Roman believers, and build their trust in his apostleship and message, which will result in

Schreiner, *Romans*, 63-65; Seifrid, *Christ, Our Righteousness*, 45-47.

²¹⁷S. K. Williams, “The ‘Righteousness of God’ in Romans,” *JBL* 99 (1980): 279-80.

²¹⁸Seifrid, *Christ, Our Righteousness*, 46.

²¹⁹Schreiner, *Romans*, 63.

²²⁰One should not attempt, however, to interpret these two passages (1:3-4 and 1:16-17) as two different summaries of the gospel, as argued by Bornkamm, *Paul*, 248-49.

support for his international mission. Further, Paul's numerous references to God with respect to the gospel are quite important in his mission and message in the letter opening.

The Letter Closing (15:14-16:27)

Many scholars treat Romans 15:14-16:27 together as marking the conclusion or the letter closing, of the letter to the Romans.²²¹ This constitutes the framework of the letter, while others consider 15:14-33 as a separate section and 16:1-27 as the conclusion,²²² or 15:14-33 as the letter closing and chapter 16 as an appendix.²²³ Still others include this entire section in "the epistolary frame," but treat the section in two separate parts: 15:14-32 (33),²²⁴ which, according to these scholars, typically belongs to the body; and 16:1 (15:33) -27, as the conclusion of the letter.²²⁵ The main body of Romans is a treatise on Paul's gospel, which he was called to preach to the gentiles. This body is bracketed by a letter opening (1:1-17) and conclusion (15:14-16:27).²²⁶ Thus, Paul completes the "epistolary frame" around the missionary themes of "the gospel" and his "apostleship to the gentiles." As the apostle to the gentiles, he plays a significant role

²²¹Nygren, *Commentary on Romans*, 452; Black, *Romans*, 9-10, 174; Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 1: 749; Heil, *Paul's Letter to the Romans*, 162; Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, 854; Morris, *The Letter to the Romans*, 34, 508; O'Brien, *Gospel and Mission*, 29; Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 884; Osborne, *Romans*, 26, 385.

²²²Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 96-100. But he also cites 15:14-33 as an "epistolary conclusion," 710.

²²³Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 389-93.

²²⁴The form and content of this passage deals with "apostolic parousia," an epistolary convention that typically belongs to the body of Paul's letter, not to the closing, which was first identified by Funk, using the "form-critical" method (see Funk, "The Apostolic Parousia: Form and Significance," 249-68 [esp. 251]).

²²⁵Jervis, *The Purpose of Romans*, 110-57, especially 120-27, 150-55; Weima, "Preaching the Gospel in Rome," 337-66; idem, *Neglected Endings*, 215-30; Leander E. Keck, *Romans*, ANTC (Nashville: Abingdon, 2005), 9, 25, 359; Andrieu du Toit, "Text-Critical Issues in Romans 14-16," in *Focusing on Paul: Persuasion and Theological Design in Romans and Galatians*, ed. Cilliers Breitenbach and David S. du Toit, BZNW 151 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2007), 354.

²²⁶Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 39.

in fulfilling God's promises of salvation to the nations. In the concluding section, Paul returns to some of the important themes of his letter opening and addresses them once again. Interestingly, he sets them in reverse order by first of all discussing his travel plans (15:14-19=1:11-13), requesting prayer (15:30-32=1:8-10), and then presenting a long list of greetings and salutations (16:1-27=1:1-7). Paul incorporates features not found in the letter opening as well, but emphasizes in the epistle, for example, a prayer for peace (15:33; cf. 14:17; 15:13) and warning against false teachers (16:17-20). Coupled with lengthy and personal greetings, these features in the concluding section of the letter are characteristic of the Romans closing.²²⁷ The inclusion of some of the elements and their order of placement in Romans vary significantly, though, and some elements are not found elsewhere. These variations indicate that Paul had a specific need and objective for the composition of Romans because he proposes to visit Rome on his way to set the stage for his mission plan for the evangelization of Spain. He hopes that the Roman Church, which includes both Jews and gentile Christians, will unite together (15:5-7) to support his mission work (15:24, 28). This concluding section contains a number of distinct features. Besides its close connection with the letter opening, the conclusion of Romans is the longest of Paul's letter closings. The most unusual characteristic is the lengthy greetings to individuals, families, and house churches (16:3-16). Paul addresses this important letter to a church that he had not planted and never visited.

The whole section of the letter closing will be approached according to the following three major sections: (1) Romans 15:14-33: Paul's mission of preaching of the

²²⁷For a detailed chart, see Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 884. For a similar chart, see Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, 854.

gospel to the gentiles; (2) Romans 16:1-24: Paul's co-workers in the gospel of his mission; and (3) Romans 16:25-27: the summary of Paul's gospel to the gentiles.

Paul's Mission of Preaching the Gospel to the Nations (15:14-33)

Within the letter closing, this section plays a vital role in stressing the motif of "the gospel," which flows from the detailed argument of the letter opening and the body. Paul expounds once again his apostolic mission to the gentiles (vv. 14-16) both in terms of his missionary activity in the past—his mission in the East (vv. 17-21)—and of his missionary activity in the future—his desire to pass through Rome on the way to Spain after delivering the collection to Jerusalem (vv. 22-29). He ends with a request for prayer during his Jerusalem visit (vv. 30-33).²²⁸ As Paul has been commissioned to preach the gospel to the gentiles, he realizes that his commission is crucial to the completion of God's eternal plan of salvation. Therefore, Paul needs to explain this gospel and by all means to proclaim it to all nations through his past missionary activity. He wants to fulfill the same through his anticipated travel plans—both in Rome and in Spain—and beyond that to shape the content and emphases of the letter.²²⁹ The latter could be achieved by the active participation and full support of the unified Roman church (15:7).

Several interpreters of Romans observe that the letter opening and closing form an obvious "frame" to the body of the epistle. They note this all the more clearly that Paul's same missionary goals are evident in the contents of 15:14-33, which verbally and

²²⁸Most scholars divide this section into three basic parts with little variation. Cf. Funk ("The Apostolic Parousia," 252-53), who breaks up this section into five parts, while Jervis (*The Purpose of Romans*, 120-27) identifies two parts: the 'writing' unit (vv. 14-21) and 'visit' unit (vv. 22-32).

²²⁹Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 885; especially Jervis, *The Purpose of Romans*, 158-63.

thematically resemble 1: 1-17 (see Table 4),²³⁰ especially 1:8-17.²³¹ The list of these remarkable parallels between the two passages is impressive. It implies that Paul had the same missionary intentions for the Romans, that is, to win their acceptance of him as an apostle to the gentiles and of his message of the gospel that will bring about the obedience not only of the Romans, but of all peoples, as well. A clear vision for world mission and the purpose of the letter to the Romans are envisaged in the frame. As it is noted above, the “apostleship” and “gospel” themes, which play such a significant role in the letter opening about Paul’s mission to the nations and the fulfillment of God’s saving purposes—are also highlighted in this section of the letter closing of Romans 15:14-33. Earlier in the closing of the letter body (15:7-13), Paul, as the apostle to the gentiles, shows the scriptural evidence of the fulfillment of God’s promises to the nations—that is, the inclusion of the gentiles in the people of God. Consequently, he ended the lengthy explication of his gospel with the worldwide scope of his mission, and continues the same even in the letter closing section.

Paul’s Apostolic Commission and the Service of the Gospel to the Nations

(15:14-21). Paul wishes to clarify for Roman Christians the purpose of his visit and the reason that he has taken the liberty of writing such an apostolic letter to a church he has never visited. This specific goal underscores Paul’s broader objective—that is, preaching

²³⁰Cf. Weima, “Gospel in Paul,” 355; Andrie du Toit, “Persuasion in Romans 1:1-17,” in *Focusing on Paul: Persuasion and Theological Design in Romans and Galatians*, ed. Cilliers Breytenbach and David S. du Toit, BZNW 151 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2007), 227-28. This essay was first published in *BZ* 33 (1989): 192-209.

²³¹Paul S. Minear, *The Obedience of Faith: The Purpose of Paul in the Epistle to the Romans*, SBT 18 (Naperville, IL: Alec R. Allenson, 1971), 37; Russell, “The Alternative Suggestion,” 183; Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 857; du Toit, “Persuasion in Romans,” 227-28; Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 885-86.

Table 4: The verbal agreements in the frame of Romans

The Parallel Themes	Romans 1:1-17	Romans 15:14-33
1. Commendation of the Roman Christians	1:7-8	15:14
2. Paul's apostolic commission (a) An act of grace (b) Its 'service' character (c) Commissioned to the gentiles (d) Purposed to win 'obedience' of the gentiles (e) His positive attitude toward his commission	1:5 (χάρις) 1:1 (δοῦλος); 1:9 (ὃ λατρεύω) 1:5, 13 (τὰ ἔθνη); 1:14 ("Ἕλληνές . . . Βάρβαροι) 1:5 (εἰς ὑπακοήν . . . τοῖς ἔθνεσιν) 1:16 (Οὐ γὰρ ἐπαισχύνομαι τὸ εὐαγγέλιον)	15:15 (χάρις δοθεῖσα) 15:16 (λειτουργγός ἱεουργέω) 15:16, 18, 27(τὰ ἔθνη) 15:18 (εἰς ὑπακοήν ἐθνῶν) 15:17 (καύχησις)
3. The centrality of Paul's gospel (a) The theme of the gospel (b) His service to the gospel (c) His mission to preach the gospel (d) The power of preaching the gospel (e) The scope of his mission of preaching the gospel	1:1, 9, 15,16 (εὐαγγέλιον) 1:9 (λατρεύω . . . ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ) 1:15 (οὕτως . . . εὐαγγελίζομαι) 1:16 (δύναμις) 1:5 (ἐν πᾶσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν) 1:16 (παντί τῷ πιστεύοντι, Ἰουδαίῳ τε . . . καὶ Ἕλληνι)	15:16, 19, 20 (εὐαγγέλιον) 15:16 (ἱεουργοῦντα τὸ εὐαγγέλιον) 15:20 (οὕτως . . . εὐαγγελίζομαι); also 15:19 15:19 (δύναμις 2x) 15:18 (εἰς ὑπακοήν ἐθνῶν) 15:20 (εὐαγγελίζεσθαι οὐχ ὅπου ὠνομάσθη Χριστός)
4. Paul's desire to visit Rome (a) Desire/intention to visit (b) Hindrance to his visit (c) Dependence on God's will (d) Anticipation of mutual benefit (e) Imparting a spiritual blessing	1:10, 11, 13, 15 1:(10, 11 implied) 13 (κωλύω) 1:10 (θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ) 1:12 1:11 (χάρισμα πνευματικόν)	15:22, 23, 24, 29, 32 15:22 (ἐγκόπτω) 15:32 (θέλημα θεοῦ) 15:23-24, 28-29, 32 15:29 (εὐλογία)
5. Paul's policy in preaching to new areas	1:13 (τινὰ καρπὸν σχῶ . . . ἐν τοῖς λοιποῖς ἔθνεσιν)	15:20 (εὐαγγελίζεσθαι οὐχ ὅπου ὠνομάσθη Χριστός)
6. Praying for one another	1:9-10 (Paul)	15:30-32 (Romans)
7. Other verbal agreements (a) Obligation/debt (ὀφειλέτης) (b) Fruit/harvest (καρπός) (c) Greeting – εἰρήνη	1:14 (Paul's) 1:13 (converts) 1:7	15:27 x2 (gentiles') 15:28 (collection) 15:33

the gospel among all the nations (τὰ ἔθνη, 1:5, 13; 15:16, 18, 27), which is a vision for the global mission. He makes this plain in a number of ways. First, Paul praised the Roman Christians' spiritual maturity.²³² Although he has already exhorted the Roman Christians, at times quite sharply in the body of the letter, yet they were faithful in their walk with the Lord. In the letter opening, Paul has applauded that their faith is well-known worldwide. Hence, his emphatic commendation of the Roman believers' spiritual maturity, both here (v. 14; cf. 16:19) and at the beginning of the letter (1:8; cf. vv.11-12), assures them that he has composed the preceding section of the letter (12:1-15:13) not because of any personal doubt concerning the maturity of their faith,²³³ due to the fact that they are "full of goodness," "filled with all knowledge," and "able to instruct one another." This confirms his confidence in their ability to fulfill his mission: that is, vision for the global gentile community.

Secondly, building on this confidence, Paul makes his purpose plain by drawing their attention to his "apostolic commission to the gospel." He proceeds to tell his audience the purpose for his writing. According to Paul, his authority to write to them is by way of reminding (ἐπαναμνησχω, v. 15)²³⁴ them of the truths they already knew

²³²Readers' commendation, or the "confidence formula" (see S. N. Olson, "Pauline Expressions of Confidence in His Addressees," *CBQ* 47 [1985]: 282-98), is a common epistolary style. It serves as an apology for the purpose of writing the letter through praise to obtain a favorable response from readers (see 295).

²³³Heil, *Paul's Letter to the Romans*, 163; Steve Mosher, *God's Power, Jesus' Faith, and World Mission: A Study in Romans* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1996), 300; Schreiner, *Romans*, 765. Cf. John W. Drane, "Why Did Paul Write Romans?" in *Pauline Studies: Essays Presented to Professor F. F. Bruce on His 70th Birthday*, ed. Donald A. Hagner and Murray J. Harris (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 211. Drane points out it seems too cleverly stated that "Paul does not seem to be conscious of trying to correct the beliefs and behavior of the Roman Christians."

²³⁴Though this specific word occurs only here in biblical literature, Paul's use of "reminding" his readers is considered to be an integral part of his ministry—e.g., 1 Cor 4:17; 15:1; Phil 3:1; 1 Thess 1:5; 4:1; 2 Tim 1:6 (see also 2 Tim 2:14; Titus 3:1)—and of the other biblical writers, as well—e.g., Heb 10:32; 13:3, 7; 2 Pet 1:12; Jude 5. For further discussion, see Miller, *The Obedience of Faith*, 37-39.

and of the faith they hold in common with him,²³⁵ although he has not established the church. Even though they are mature believers, they need to be told again about such basic truths as tolerance and unity in the church, as we all need to be reminded. Paul wrote (ἔγραψα)²³⁶ about these truths “rather boldly”²³⁷—that is, with authority rooted in his apostolic commission. In verses 15b-19, Paul further conveys some compelling features of his commission to win the confidence of Roman Christianity for fulfilling his worldwide mission. First of all, Paul relates to his readers that his apostolic commission is an act of grace. Paul, once again—as he has earlier claimed in the letter opening (δι’ οὗ ἐλάβομεν χάριν καὶ ἀποστολήν, 1:5)—affirms that both his commission to “the gospel of God” and being “the apostle to the gentiles” are the “grace given to him by God” (τὴν χάριν τὴν δοθεῖσάν μοι ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ).²³⁸ This grace makes him responsible for the Roman Christians because they, too, ethnically form a gentile-majority church. As a matter of fact, Rome belongs to one of the gentile nations, both ethnically and geographically, that is, as a people group and as a nation. Paul presents the “grace of his calling to be an

²³⁵William G. T. Shedd, *A Critical and Doctrinal Commentary upon the Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans* (New York: Scribner, 1888), 412-13. So also Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 711; Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 889; Schreiner, *Romans*, 765. This view rules out Klein’s claim that Paul’s purpose for writing is to offering Roman Christianity a legitimate status because it lacked an apostolic foundation. (See G. Klein, “Paul’s Purpose in Writing the Epistle to the Romans,” in *The Romans Debate*, rev. ed., ed. K. P. Donfried [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991], 29-43.)

²³⁶Note the aorist ἔγραψα that refers to the past action of Paul’s writing. An earlier part of the letter thus is indicated. So BDF, 334; Nigel Turner, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek: Syntax* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1963), 3:73. In reference to this—whether ἀπὸ μέρους refers to all or parts of the letter or to one part among many—see Miller, *The Obedience of Faith*, 34-37.

²³⁷For details, see Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 888 n. 23.

²³⁸See Rom 15:15b; 12:3; cf. Acts 22:21; 26:17-18; 1 Cor 3:10; Gal 2:9; Eph 3:2, 7-8; Col 1:25.

apostle to the gentiles” to explain his boldness in writing to them.²³⁹ God’s powerful grace enabled him “in order to be” (εἰς τὸ εἶναι) a minister of Christ Jesus among the gentiles, indicating clearly the purpose for his missionary call and the reason that he writes to them.

The second feature of Paul’s apostolic commission is characterized by “service,” which he describes, using cultic imagery—as “a minister” (λειτουργός, also 13:6; 15:27)²⁴⁰ of Christ Jesus in the “priestly service” or “priestly duty” (ἱεουργέω).²⁴¹ This calls to mind Paul’s service (λατρεύω) to God in the gospel of His Son (v. 9; and also his identity as a “servant of Christ Jesus” in v. 1) in the letter opening, but here he amplifies the idea in clearer and specific terms, drawing from the OT cultic metaphor, which is similar to the service of a priest. Third, his priestly service is for preaching the

²³⁹See Wedderburn, *The Reasons for Romans*, 98-99.

²⁴⁰Although λειτουργός refers to ministry in general (e.g., 13:6; 15:27; Acts 13:1-2; Phil 2:25; Heb 1:7; and, in the LXX, Josh 1:1; 2 Sam 13:18; 1 Kgs 10:5; Pss 102[103]:21; 103[104]:4), the term often connotes “a priest,” “priests,” or “a priestly office” (e.g., in the LXX, Ezra 7:24; Neh 10:40 [=2 Esdr 20:40]; Isa 61:6; Sir 7:30; and also in the NT, Heb 8:2; 10:11; Luke 1:23). For more details, see Moo, *Romans*, 889, also 804; Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, 859. Here the term refers to a “priest” or “priestly ministry” for its use in the context of cultic stock words, e.g., “priestly service” (ἱεουργοῦντα), “offering” (προσφορά), “acceptable” (εὐπρόσδεκτος), “sanctified” (ἡγιασμένη), according to most commentators. However, Cranfield, following Karl Barth (*A Shorter Commentary on Romans* [Richmond: John Knox, 1959], 177), thinks that Paul is fulfilling the function of a Levite, rather than that of a priest (see *Romans 9-16*, 755). The context does not call for such an interpretation, though. For a critique, see Schreiner, *Romans*, 766.

²⁴¹The word ἱεουργέω is a late verb from ἱεουργος (ἱερός and ἔργω). It basically means “to serve as a priest” or “to perform the work of a priest.” It occurs only here in the NT and once only in the LXX (4 Macc 7:8), in which the meaning is “those who serve the law as priests” (τοὺς ἱεουργοῦντας τὸν νόμον). But Philo (*Allegorical Interpretation* 3.45, 175; *Life of Moses* 2.94, 149; *Special Laws* 1.249; 4.19) and Josephus (*Antiquities* 5.263; 6.102; 7.333; 14.65; 17.166) consistently used the word to denote the priestly sacrificial offering. See also G. Schrenk, “ἱεουργέω,” *TDNT* 3:251-52; Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, 860. The verb—though not having the same etymological relation to λειτουργός, as it does in English—is used in priestly metaphors. It is used here in reference to the apostle Paul only. Nowhere in the NT is the word “priest” applied to an apostle, a preacher, or a teacher of the gospel or of the Word of God. Dunn also notes a contrast between the reading of LXX (“serving the law”) and Paul (“serving the gospel”), which characterizes the difference between Jew and Christian. For details, see Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, 861.

gospel of God (τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ θεοῦ, see v. 1). This implies the task or activity of Paul's apostolic commission. Therefore, Paul claims in the letter opening that his apostolic commission is for service in the gospel (v. 9), for which he was separated (v. 1). Paul reaffirms it more clearly and emphatically in this verse because he claims that apostolic grace is given to him "to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the nations in the priestly service of the gospel of God" (v. 16). In other words, Paul is commissioned to be the minister of Jesus Christ to the nations to serve the gospel of God like a "priest." Preaching the gospel of God is a priestly service for him.

The fourth feature comprises the sphere, or the scope, of his commission. In his priestly service, he was commissioned as a minister "to the nations" (εἰς τὰ ἔθνη, cf. also 1:5, 13, 18, 27; 11:13; cf. Gal 2:9). A clear sense of Paul's global missionary program is directed to those who have not yet heard the gospel.²⁴² He was called, as Thomas Aquinas has asserted, "to serve God for the conversion of the Gentiles."²⁴³ His purpose is presenting to God an offering (ἡ προσφορά),²⁴⁴ consisting of the nations (τῶν ἐθνῶν) that have come to faith in Christ becoming acceptable (εὐπρόσδεκτος, cf. Phil 4:18; 1 Pet 2:5) to God, being sanctified in the Holy Spirit.²⁴⁵ Paul's preaching of the gospel

²⁴²Cf. Jewett, *Romans*, 907.

²⁴³Thomas Aquinas, *Lectures on the Letter to the Romans*, ed. Jeremy Holmes and trans. Fabian Larcher, (Aquinas Center for Theological Renewal, Ave Maria University), no. 1167. 580 [on-line]; accessed 4 May 2010; available from http://www.aquinas.avemaria.edu/Aquinas_on_Romans.pdf; Internet.

²⁴⁴The word could mean (1) the act of bringing or presenting an offering both literally and symbolically (e.g., Heb 10:10, 14, 18; Acts 24:17; also in *1 Clem* 40:4), and (2) or "that which is brought, the offering or the gift itself," as the context here signifies (e.g., Acts 21:26; Eph 5:2; Heb 10: 5, 8; Sir 14:11; 34:18; 35:6; *1 Clem* 36:1). Cf. BDAG, 887. Konrad Weiss ("προσφέρω, προσφορά," *TDNT* 9: 68) shows that the word always appears in the NT with the meaning of "sacrifice," which appears first in the LXX (e.g., Ps 39:6; Dan 3:38; etc.), and Josephus (e.g., *Ant* 11:77) and other early writings. See also Wolfgang Schenk, "προσφορά," *EDNT* 3:178. Thus, the offering is the gentiles, who are coming to faith in Christ by the preaching of the gospel, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

²⁴⁵A clear Trinitarian formulation is pictured in this verse, which later came to be known as

resulted in the gentiles' changing into an acceptable offering to God. Consequently, Paul reiterates the theme of the sacrifice that is "acceptable to God" in 12:1.²⁴⁶ The genitive ἡ προσφορά τῶν ἐθνῶν (the offering of the nations) should not be understood as an "offering from the nations" (subjective genitive),²⁴⁷ but the gentiles/nations themselves (genitive of apposition)²⁴⁸ are the offering." Similarly, Calvin believes that these gentiles are "the people whom he [Paul] gained for God" in the ministration of the gospel and makes them an offering to God as a sacrifice like a priest.²⁴⁹ The expression ἡ προσφορά τῶν ἐθνῶν (the offering of the nations) lacks a precise NT parallel.

However, it seems that this passage echoes an OT passage from Isaiah 66:19-20a: ". . . and from them I will send survivors (or BBE "who are still living"; LXX σεσωσμένους) to the nations . . . that have not heard my name or seen my glory, and they shall declare my glory among the nations. And they shall bring all your brothers 'from all the nations as an offering' (LXX ἐκ πάντων τῶν ἐθνῶν δῶρον²⁵⁰) to the LORD"

the doctrine of the Trinity: ". . . of Christ Jesus . . . of God . . . in the Holy Spirit." Cf. Barrett ("by accident, as it were"), *The Epistle to the Romans*, 275; Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 512; Fee, *God's Empowering Presence*, 626-27.

²⁴⁶Dahl, "The Missionary Theology in the Epistle," 87.

²⁴⁷E.g., D. W. B. Robinson, "The Priesthood of Paul in the Gospel of Hope," in *Reconciliation and Hope: New Testament Essays on Atonement and Eschatology Presented to L. L. Morris on His Sixtieth Birthday*, ed. R. J. Banks (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 231; K. F. Nickle, *The Collection: A Study in Paul's Strategy*, SBT 48 (Naperville, IL: Allenson, 1966), 134; Elliott, "Language and Style," 91-92. Hence, the translation that "the Gentiles might become an offering" (so NIV; NJV) makes better sense in this context than rendering "the offering of the nations" (so RSV; NRSV; ESV; NKJ; NAB; NASB).

²⁴⁸So Shedd, *Romans*, 413; Sanday and Headlam, *Romans*, 405; A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, vol. 4, *The Epistles of Paul* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1931), 420; Barrett, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 275; Cranfield, *Romans*, 756; Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 393; Hultgren, *Paul's Gospel and Mission*, 134; Jervis, *The Purpose of Romans*, 122; Moo, *Romans*, 890; Schreiner, *Romans*, 767; Jewett, *Romans*, 907 n. 58. Though Fitzmyer (*Romans*, 712) recognizes the construction to be objective genitive, it carries the same meaning.

²⁴⁹Calvin, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 527.

²⁵⁰The LXX translated δῶρον (simply means "gift," "present," or "offering") for the Hebrew word מִנְחָה (*minihah*) meaning "a gift" or "an offering," or in a cultic setting, "an offering made to God, whether grain or animal." Here, Isaiah's use has a cultic connotation. As a result, Paul's use of προσφορά

Murray and numerous others think that Paul might have derived this idea from the context of Yahweh's promise of gathering all nations and tongues (LXX συναγαγεῖν πάντα τὰ ἔθνη καὶ τὰς γλώσσας; Isa 66:18).²⁵¹ Paul, as the apostle to the gentiles, saw himself fulfilling this prophecy.²⁵² His "brothers" gentiles from all the nations are his offering for the Lord. However, the Jews regard the gentiles as "unclean." For this reason, the "offering" of which Paul speaks in 15:16 is most likely not the "whole world," as John Chrysostom contended,²⁵³ but "the Gentile world itself," as Käsemann has assumed.²⁵⁴ Paul's commission as the apostle to the gentiles includes each and every one, though, without discrimination. For as with OT sacrifices, it is essential that those offerings (here, gentiles) must be pure, unblemished, and sanctified to be acceptable to God (cf. Lev 22:19, 20, 21). Therefore, it is understood, according to Augustine, that "the Gentiles are offered to God as acceptable sacrifice when, believing in Christ, they are sanctified through the gospel."²⁵⁵ These gentiles—who were once kept at a distance from the altar in Yahweh's temple—are brought near as an unblemished and sanctified

is more appropriate. Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 210-11.

²⁵¹Ibid.; Hultgren, *Paul's Gospel and Mission*, 134; Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 890 n. 35; Barnett, *Romans*, 343.

²⁵²See James M. Scott, *Paul and the Nations: The Old Testament and Jewish Background of Paul's Mission to the Nations with special reference to the Destination of Galatians*, WUNT 84 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1995), 145-47.

²⁵³John Chrysostom, *Homilies of St. John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople, on the Epistle of St. Paul the Apostle to the Romans*, trans. J. B. Morris and W. H. Simcox, rev. with notes by George B. Stevens, 329-564, in *Saint Chrysostom: Homilies on the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistle to the Romans*, NPNF, vol. 11 (reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 543.

²⁵⁴Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 393.

²⁵⁵St. Augustine, *Propositions from the Epistle to the Romans*, no. 83, in Paula Fredriksen Landes, *Augustine on Romans: Propositions from the Epistle to the Romans and Unfinished Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, SBL Texts and Translations 23 ECLS 6 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1982), 49.

offering that is well-pleasing to God, thus fulfilling the OT sacrifices. Paul has already partly fulfilled that “offering” when he fully preached the gospel of Christ from Jerusalem and all the way around to Illyricum (15:19). His mission is not yet complete as the apostle to the gentiles. Paul’s desire is coming to Rome to prepare the ground for his mission to Spain, even going beyond the farthest point of the gentile world, so that he can bring more gentile people from the nations as “offering” to God. Moreover, the sanctification of the gentiles is quite significant as Morris and others have noted.²⁵⁶ This may have suggested to the Jewish believers Paul’s admonition “to accept one another as Christ has accepted you” (15:7; cf. Acts 10:15; also 1 Cor 1:2; 6:11). This will in turn, strengthen the relationship of the Roman Christians, between Jews and gentiles, and will help with Paul’s mission to the nations beyond Rome.

Fifth, the goal of Paul’s apostolic commission is winning “the obedience of the gentiles” (εἰς ὑπακοὴν ἐθνῶν, 15:18). This is equivalent to “the obedience of faith” (εἰς ὑπακοὴν πίστεως)²⁵⁷ already echoed in the prescript (1:5) and in the doxology (16:26) and, consequently, confirming his worldwide missionary purpose, which he clearly articulates in the letter opening. Paul’s preaching of the gospel resulted in the “obedience of the gentiles,” which is evidently recognized as the conversion of the nations that comes through faith (1:5). Note that in this verse Paul merely explains his mission to the gentiles as “obedience” because it is understood that saving faith should include obedience to be effective and genuine.²⁵⁸ Similarly, Bowers also emphasizes that Paul is

²⁵⁶Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 512; Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence*, 627.

²⁵⁷Schreiner, *Romans*, 768.

²⁵⁸Ibid. However, Garlington (“The Obedience of Faith, Part 1,” 222) takes the phrase in a

sent not only to proclaim the gospel to the gentiles, but to secure their obedience, as well.²⁵⁹ Hearing must be accompanied by faith (10:14-21). So, Paul proclaims the gospel with the intention of converting them.

Thus, Paul had every reason to boast (καύχησης),²⁶⁰ not about his own accomplishments,²⁶¹ but “in the things pertaining to God” (τὰ πρὸς τὸν θεόν, v. 17).²⁶² This does not signify any specific ministry of Paul; rather it refers to the entirety of his ministry to the nations, which is being fulfilled wholly in line with God’s promises to the nations in the OT.²⁶³ Paul humbly acknowledges, though, that he acted merely as an instrument²⁶⁴ of God. The risen and exalted Christ worked through him to secure obedience of the nations. Jesus Himself is “a servant to the circumcised to show God’s truthfulness, in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs and that the gentiles might glorify God for his mercy” (15:8-9). Christ has performed the same ministry *through Paul* (δι’ ἐμοῦ), “his servant,” bringing the nations to a saving faith, and therefore

broader sense, and hence, he “envisages not only the believing reception of his gospel by the nations but also their constancy of Christian conduct.” So O’Brien, *Gospel and Mission*, 33-34.

²⁵⁹Bowers, “Fulfilling the Gospel,” 187.

²⁶⁰Paul uses this word of his own activity, but he always employs it for what God has done through him, not of his own human accomplishments. See Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 512.

²⁶¹Paul condemns boasting in one’s own achievements; see 3:27; 4:2-3. Cf. also 1 Cor 3:21; 13:4; Gal 6:14; Eph 2:9.

²⁶²So ASV and NASV. Cf. “in my service to God” in the NIV; or “of my work for God” in the ESV, RSV and NRSV. This phrase is an adverbial accusative, but the same phrase in Heb 2:17 is the accusative of respect. So BDF, 160; Turner, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek*, 221. Cf. Robertson (*Word Pictures in the New Testament*, 4: 420), who understands this phrase as an accusative of the general reference to the article used with the prepositional phrase, meaning “as to the things relating to God.”

²⁶³See Schreiner’s (*Romans*, 767 n. 8) criticism of Jervis, who wrongly interpreted the phrase τὰ πρὸς τὸν θεόν as referring to the “signs and wonders” of v. 19 (*The Purpose of Romans*, 123).

²⁶⁴Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 892.

fulfilling God's promises as made to the patriarchs. Paul has already partly procured the obedience of the gentiles "from Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum (15:19)."

Jesus, who has worked through Paul, has helped to obtain the obedience of the nations through "word" and "deed" (λόγῳ καὶ ἔργῳ), and "by the power of signs and wonders" (ἐν δυνάμει σημείων καὶ τεράτων) and "by the power of the Spirit of God" (ἐν δυνάμει πνεύματος [θεοῦ]),²⁶⁵ vv. 18b-19a).²⁶⁶ This phrase, "signs and wonders," recalls Exodus miraculous events in the OT,²⁶⁷ by which God redeemed His covenant people from Egyptian bondage and brought them to the Promised Land. This phrase is regularly associated in the Scripture with God's great redemptive works.²⁶⁸ For this reason, the description of the miracles in the similar language of the early church and of Paul has great significance.²⁶⁹ He deliberately selects this phrase to illustrate that his apostolic

²⁶⁵The word πνεύματος stands alone in some manuscripts, e. g., B, Vigilius, and some translations support this reading, as in NASV and NIV, while both Cranfield (*The Epistle to the Romans*, 2: 758) and Dunn (*Romans 9-16*, 856) also favor it as the simplest reading. Some manuscripts add ἁγίου after πνεύματος, which seems to be quite natural reading as found in A, D c, F, G, many Greek minuscules, pc, lat, vg, sy^{hmg}, cop^{sa}. Numerous church fathers and modern translations (e.g., BBE, RSV) defend this reading. While other manuscripts add θεοῦ after πνεύματος, this makes the reading harder as in p⁴⁶, 8, D^b, P, Ψ, numerous minuscules, Byz, Lect, syr^{p,h}, and has significant support from many church fathers and major modern translations (e.g., ESV, NAB, NJB, NKJV, NRSV). However, the harder reading πνεύματος θεοῦ is preferred against the simplest reading (πνεύματος) and natural (πνεύματος ἁγίου) readings because it has the earliest and overwhelming manuscript evidence.

²⁶⁶Some interpreters of Romans think that there is chiasmic or crossover structure in these verses, in which Paul seems to relate 'by word' with "by the power of the Holy Spirit," and 'by deed' with "by the power of signs and wonders." See, e.g., Leenhardt, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 369; Black, *Romans*, 203; Rengstorf, in *TDNT* 7:259.

²⁶⁷During the Exodus events, God accomplished many miracles, which are frequently referred to as "signs (σημεῖα) and wonders (τέρατα)," through Moses to bring about deliverance to His covenant people. Of the 30 occurrences of the phrase in the LXX, 17 refer to the Exodus events (Exod 7:3; 10:9, 10; Deut 4:34; 6:22; 7:19; 11:3; 26:8; 29:3; 34:11; Neh 9:10; Pss 78:43; 105:27; 135:9; Jer 32:20, 21; Wis 10:16; Bar 2:11. For more detailed references, see Rengstorf, in *TDNT* 7: 200-69; Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, 862-63; D. A. Carson, "The Purpose of Signs and Wonders in the New Testament," in *Power Religion: The Selling Out of the Evangelical Church?* ed. M. S. Horton (Chicago: Moody, 1992), 89-118.

²⁶⁸So J. W. Woodhouse, "Signs and Wonders in the Bible," in *Signs and Wonders and Evangelicals*, ed. R. Doyle, 17-35 (Homebush West, NSW: Lancer, 1987), 27. (However, in a few instances, the "signs and wonders" have been used negatively to lead people away from God's redemptive acts [28]: Deut 13:1-3; Matt 24:24; Mark 13:22; 2 Thess 2:9-10; Rev 13:13-14).

²⁶⁹In the book of Acts, Luke records numerous instances of "signs and wonders" that Christ

ministry to the gentiles (note the term ἔθνη that appears three times in verses 16 [x2] and 18) is deeply rooted within the framework of salvation history.²⁷⁰ Paul is the only apostle to the gentiles, which has exposed the whole gentile world to the gospel. He indicates that what Christ has accomplished through him—whether through “words,” including but not limited to gospel preaching, or “by deeds” as a whole, including “signs and wonders,” is empowered by the Holy Spirit (cf. 1 Thess 1:5).²⁷¹ As a result, these phrases mean that the totality of Paul’s ministry is the work of the power of the Holy Spirit, which Jesus has achieved through Paul and caused the gentiles to come to faith.²⁷²

This work of the Holy Spirit results in (ὥστε, so that) Paul’s proclamation of the gospel among the gentiles, “from Jerusalem and *all the way around to* Illyricum” (ἀπὸ Ἱερουσαλὴμ καὶ κύκλῳ μέχρι τοῦ Ἰλλυρικοῦ).²⁷³ Most interpreters of Romans consider the

performed through the apostles, especially through Paul, in the power of the Holy Spirit. See, e.g., the healing of a crippled man in Lystra (14:8-10), casting a demon out of a slave girl in Philippi (16:16-18), restoring life to a dead man in Ephesus (20:9-12), and many more. See 4:30; 5:12; 13:6-12; 14:1-3; 16:25-35; 19:11-20. As a result of these miracles, for instance: “. . . when the Proconsul saw what had happened, he came to believe . . .” (Acts 13:12, NAB). Cf. also 2 Cor 12:12; Heb 2:4.

²⁷⁰Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, 863; Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 893.

²⁷¹So Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 212-13; Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 2:759; Osborne, *Romans*, 390. Kenneth Boa and William Kruidenier, *Romans*, Holman New Testament Commentary, vol. 6 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2000), 449-50.

²⁷²As Osborne (*Romans*, 390) observes, “The Holy Spirit is not just connected with the words of Paul (indicating the power of Paul’s preaching), nor can the deeds be narrowed to signs and wonders. The deeds are everything Paul has done, and the Holy Spirit provides the power for the deeds as well as the words.” According to Boa and Kruidenier (*Romans*, 450), Paul implements a Hebrew figure of speech called *merism*, where the totality is indicated by citing its two opposite extremes (see Ps 139:8-10) to indicate the arena in which he has preached the gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit.

²⁷³This phrase has been variously interpreted by scholars. (1) For some, Paul conducts ministry “round about” or “in a circle,” Jerusalem, with its surrounding countries or environs. (So Godet, *Commentary on Romans*, 480. (2) Others think that it is the “wide arc,” or as one part of a larger “circle” or “grand sweep,” by which the gospel moved throughout the gentile world (Lenski, *Romans*, 885; Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 394; Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, 863-64; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 713-14); BDAG, 576a. (3) While others advocates that it is related to the centrality of Jerusalem, referring to Paul’s mission as a “circle,” building on the table of the nations in Gen 10 and spreading out from Jerusalem to the nations (cf. Knox [“Romans 15:14-23,” 11], who was very close to Scott’s idea; Byrne, *Romans*, 438; Scott, *Paul and the Nations*, 135-80, especially 138-39. Cf. Schreiner, *Romans*, 769, who partly agrees with this interpretation. For a critique of Scott’s view, see Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Paul the Missionary: Realities, Strategies, and Methods* [Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic; Nottingham, UK: Apollos, 2008, 222-24]).

geographical references not to be inclusive of Jerusalem and Illyricum,²⁷⁴ but as extending between these two poles.²⁷⁵ This phrase is regarded to mean that he has preached from the boundary of Jerusalem to the boundary of Illyricum.²⁷⁶ Paul not only mentions the result of his ministry in terms of ‘the geographical frame of reference,’²⁷⁷ but also connects it with the task of his mission to the gentiles and his accomplishment. According to him, “From the boundary of Jerusalem to the boundary of Illyricum, I have fulfilled (πεπληρωκέμαι)²⁷⁸ the gospel (that is, preaching the gospel) of Christ” (15:19). He no longer has “any room for work in these regions” (15:23)—that is, the areas between Jerusalem and Illyricum. Paul is hardly saying that he had preached the gospel in each locality, and to every single person or even every town and village of these

(4) Still others suggest that Paul had just moved “around,” “in a circuitous route,” from place to place as he brought the gospel to the nations (Chrysostom, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 544; Sanday and Headlam, *Romans*, 407; Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 2:761-62; Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 895).

²⁷⁴Paul’s reference to the geographical names of Jerusalem and Illyricum is puzzling for several reasons: (1) Antioch was the sending church and the starting point for Paul’s mission (Acts 13:1-4). (2) Neither place was directly connected to any of his missionary journeys. (3) Even though Paul has preached the gospel in Jerusalem (“... preaching boldly in the name of the Lord,” Acts 9:28), it was not concerned with gentiles because he speaks here about the preaching to the gentiles. Though Illyricum was unknown with respect to Paul’s preaching there, reference to Jerusalem is appropriate for a number of reasons: (1) Paul had a vision in the temple associated with his call to preach to the gentiles (Acts 22:19-21). (2) In Jerusalem, the apostles gave Paul the right hand of fellowship for his mission among the gentiles (Gal 2:9; cf. Acts 15:1-21). (3) Jerusalem is regarded as the starting point of all Christian preaching (cf. Luke 24:47). (4) It is from Jerusalem that the gospel went forth to the whole world. It is considered as the starting point of world mission (cf. Acts 1:8). See Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 213-14; Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 514; Martin Hengel, *The Pre-Christian Paul* (London: SCM; Philadelphia: Trinity Press, 1991), 24; O’Brien, *Gospel and Mission*, 37-38. In all probability, however, the phrase “from the borders of Jerusalem to the borders of Illyricum” indicates simply the extent of Paul’s accomplishment of his missionary work among the gentiles (cf. Osborne, *Romans*, 391).

²⁷⁵So Sanday and Headlam, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 407; Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 394; Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 2:760-61; Bornkamm, *Paul*, 53.

²⁷⁶So Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 214; Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 514; Osborne, *Romans*, 391.

²⁷⁷For a detailed discussion about the significance of the geographical frame of reference, see O’Brien, *Gospel and Mission*, 38-43. Contra A. S. Geyser, who disputes regarding taking the phrase geographically, and attests that it is Paul’s way of validating his apostleship (“Un essai d’explication de Rm. XV 19,” *NTS* 6 [1959-60]: 156-59).

²⁷⁸The verb πληρόω has a wide range of meanings, which includes “fill, make full; bring to completion; complete, accomplish, finish to fill”; or it can also mean “make fully known,” “proclaim fully” (cf. Col 1:25; Acts 14:26). See BDAG, 827-29, and it also categorizes this use of the verb under “to bring to completion that which was already begun, complete, finish” (n. 3).” G. Delling, “πληρόω,” *TDNT* 6:286-98.

regions.²⁷⁹ He must have preached in strategic centers throughout the territory named and planted churches, from which faith will be spread by others to surrounding areas, consequently fulfilling his goal of preaching the gospel to all nations.²⁸⁰ Due to the fact that he has already completed his mission to the nations in the Eastern part of the Roman Empire, it is time to turn west.

Finally, in verses 20-21, Paul qualifies the claim of fulfilling his mission to the nations by describing his policy of preaching in new areas as the ‘guiding principle’ in his apostolic commission.²⁸¹ It is his “ambition to preach the gospel, not where Christ has already been named, so that I may not build upon the foundation laid by another” (15:20; cf. 2 Cor 10:15-16). In other words, Paul’s apostolic goal is planting churches by preaching the gospel in places that Jesus is not yet named in worship, or confessed by name.²⁸² His aim has been that of a pioneer missionary, who is passionate to make the initial proclamation of the gospel in a new area, so that he may fulfill his goal of planting churches where Christ is not yet acknowledged. Paul’s task is planting the seed by preaching the gospel, which others will water (1 Cor 3:5-8). As Stott has rightly commented, “His own calling and gift as apostle to the Gentiles was to pioneer the

²⁷⁹Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 214; Hultgren, *Paul’s Gospel and Mission*, 131-32; Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 514; Schreiner, *Romans*, 769-70; Osborne, *Romans*, 391.

²⁸⁰Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 514; Keck, *Romans*, 362.

²⁸¹Hultgren, *Paul’s Gospel and Mission*, 131; Bower, “Fulfilling the Gospel,” 196 n. 24. This should not be construed, though, to mean that Paul never preached in places where churches already existed or pressed hard to mean a rigid law that he does not allow any exceptions. So Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 2:765.

²⁸²The word *ὀνομάζω*, in passive form, has a solemn sense or more pregnant meaning like “be named in worship,” “acknowledged,” “confessed” (so Sanday and Headlam, *Romans*, 408; Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 215; Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 377; Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 2: 764; Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, 865; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 715; Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 896 (cf. Josh 23:7; Isa 26:13; Jer 20:9; Amos 6:10; 1 Cor 5:11; Eph 1:21; 2 Tim 2:19); and not just in the sense of merely “be made known” as in BDAG, 714.3. So Jewett agrees (*Romans*, 915), or it is not even merely declared or reported.

evangelization of the Gentile world, and then leave to others, especially to local, residential presbyters, the pastoral care of the churches.”²⁸³ Paul’s task is establishing the foundation as an expert builder, and then someone else will build on it (1 Cor 3:10). He desires to go to places where no churches have been planted, so that he will not need to build upon another’s foundation. Because Paul has previously laid the foundation in the East, it is time for the local ministers to “water” (2 Cor 3:6), and “build on” (1 Cor 3:10), what he has already planted. This explicates his apostolic aim is to proceed far beyond Rome, where no churches yet have been founded.

Paul derives the support of his “guiding principle” in verse 20 from the OT Scripture found in Isaiah 52:15, which is cited in the context of the Servant Song (Isa 52:13-53:12). Such a song references the sacrifice of the Servant,²⁸⁴ with His worldwide effect. Isaiah writes, His “appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any man, and his form marred beyond human likeness (Isa 52:14), so will he sprinkle *many nations* (ἐθνῶν πολλὰ), and *kings* will shut their mouths because of him, for what they were not told, they will see, and what they have not heard, they will understand” (Isa 52:15 NIV). Hence, in this Servant Song, Paul indubitably saw himself fulfilling his mission to the nations, which is the proclaiming the gospel of Christ. In Cranfield’s words, “Paul sees the words of the prophet as a promise, which is even now being fulfilled by the spreading of the

²⁸³Stott, *The Message of Romans*, 382. So Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 2:763-64.

²⁸⁴Some contend that Paul here (as elsewhere) views himself in this servant role. So Alexander Kerrigan, “Echoes of Themes from the Servant Songs in Pauline Theology,” in *Studiorum Paulinorum congressus internationalis catholicus*, AnBib 18 (Rome: Biblical Institute, 1963), 2:17-28; Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, 865; idem, *Jesus and the Spirit: A Study of the Religious and Charismatic Experience of Jesus and the First Christians Reflected in the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1975), 113, 398 n. 70; O’Brien, *Gospel and Mission*, 46. It is unlikely here, however, because the majority of interpreters of Romans correctly identify Christ as the Servant of Yahweh. Paul’s mission is proclaiming the gospel “about him” (περὶ αὐτοῦ), the Servant, who is the Messiah. So Cranfield. *The Epistle to the Romans*, 2: 765 n. 2; Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 395; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 716.

knowledge of Christ.”²⁸⁵ His decision to preach the gospel where Christ has not already been named echoes Isaiah’s message of *who have not heard* will finally *understand*. Paul’s sense of apostolic commission, as the apostle to the gentiles, is reminiscent of Isaiah’s call for the proclamation of the message to those who have not heard: “nations” and “kings.” This Servant Song additionally recalls that the content of Paul’s preaching to the nations is “concerning him” (περὶ αὐτοῦ), “the Servant,” about whom the nations have not yet heard.²⁸⁶ Certainly, with these prophetic words, Paul realizes that his next target groups for his mission constitute the people in Spain and beyond who have not yet heard “about him.”²⁸⁷ Paul is thus ready to implement his future mission plan with this scriptural witness to his mission.

Paul’s Future Plans for His Mission to the Nations (15:22-33). In this section, Paul presents a review of his current missionary activities and the future proposal for his mission to Jerusalem (vv. 25-28), Rome (vv. 22-24, 28-29), and Spain (vv. 24, 28). It ends with a prayer appeal pertaining to his Jerusalem visit (vv. 30-33). The goals of these missionary activities are garnering support from the Roman believers and to fulfill his apostolic commission to the nations that still have not heard the gospel. The following will describe the order of Paul’s visits (Jerusalem, Rome, and Spain) and will show how they fit into his global mission, and their major function in the context of his mission to the nations.

²⁸⁵Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 2: 765.

²⁸⁶See Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 897-98.

²⁸⁷Shiu-Lun Shum, *Paul’s Use of Isaiah in Romans: A Comparative Study of Paul’s Letter to the Romans and the Sibylline and Qumran Sectarian Texts*, WUNT 156 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), 257.

First, taking the offering to Jerusalem is the immediate task before visiting Roman believers.²⁸⁸ It is true that the offering was so essential for Paul to deliver it personally to Christians in Jerusalem that he was eager to delay a visit to Rome (15:25; cf. 1 Cor 16:1-4; 2 Cor 8-9).²⁸⁹ Paul's request for prayer specifically for his Jerusalem visit (15:30-32) and the peace benediction (15:33) are the evidence for its significance. Though Paul's concern for the poor was part and parcel of his ministry from the very beginning (cf. Gal 2:10; Acts 11:27-30), his offering to "the poor among the saints"²⁹⁰ in Jerusalem (15:26) is quite important from the viewpoint of Paul's mission to the nations. (1) Paul believed that the offering given to Jerusalem was the "fulfillment of the promise that gentiles would bring their gifts to Jerusalem" (Isa 2:2-4 = Mic 4:1-2; Isa 45:14; 60:6-7; 61:6; Tob 13:11; 1QM 12:13-15). Consequently, giving their material possessions signifies their inclusion in the people of God.²⁹¹ (2) The acceptance of the gentile offering by the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem would symbolize the strong unity of Jews and

²⁸⁸Acts records (11:27-30), as in Josephus (*Ant.* 20.5.2.110), that a famine that hit Palestine severely in AD 46-48, caused financial hardships among the Christians in Jerusalem. Many of them were forced into poverty as a result.

²⁸⁹Schreiner, *Romans*, 776. Traveling to Jerusalem and the collection, however, do not serve as the central points of the letter or play a key role in causing Paul to write such a long letter, as argued by Jervell (see Jacob Jervell, "The Letter to Jerusalem," in *The Romans Debate*, rev. ed., ed. Karl P. Donfried, [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991], 53-64); cf. Dahl, "Missionary Theology," 77. This could be one of the motives for writing Romans, but not the main reason. The collection also played an important role toward the idea of the mission that Paul envisioned—that is, unifying the Roman church to effectively participate in preaching the gospel to the nations.

²⁹⁰This phrase, "the poor among the saints" (τοὺς πτωχοὺς τῶν ἁγίων), has been variously interpreted. Some have understood the genitive τῶν ἁγίων as epexegetical or appositional—that is, "the poor who are saints," (or the KJV's "the poor saints"). So also E. Bammel, "πτωχός," *TDNT* 6:909; Thomas E. Schmidt, "Riches and Poverty," *DPL*, 827. This is unlikely because it will mean that all the saints in Jerusalem are poor. Paul does not mean that all the saints in Jerusalem were poor. Therefore, all the major translations (ESV, NAB, NASB, NIV, NJV, RSV, NRSV) and the interpreters of Romans take the genitive as partitive—that is, "the poor among the saints." (So Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 218; Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 2: 773; Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 401; Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 520; Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, 875; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 722; Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 903-04; Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, 4:423; Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 84-85.)

²⁹¹So Schreiner, *Romans*, 776; Osborne, *Romans*, 398. Contra Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 905 n. 54.

gentiles as the people of God. It would be an essential model for Roman Christians, among whom the same Jew-gentile tensions exist (14:1; 15:13).²⁹² In a similar vein, Keck notes, “For him (Paul), by contributing to the needs of the poor Christian Jews, the Gentile churches acknowledge that they are part of one church, not ‘Gentile Christianity,’ a breakaway movement, or parallel opinion.”²⁹³ (3) The term *κοινωνία* in verse 26, which has been commonly translated as “contribution,” literally means “fellowship,” indicating solidarity and partnership.²⁹⁴ Hence, the gentiles’ contribution to the poor among the saints in Jerusalem demonstrated their love and partnership with them in the gospel.²⁹⁵ (4) In verse 27, Paul explains mutual sharing between the Jews and the gentiles: “For if the Gentiles have come to share in their spiritual blessings, they ought to be of service to them in material blessings.” This was not a legal debt or just a charitable collection, but out of moral duty because it is from the Jews that the gentiles received the blessings of salvation.²⁹⁶ (The gentiles’ indebtedness to the Jews is repeated twice in this verse.) Paul once again reminds his readers of the Jewish priority in salvation history—the theme that is mentioned in the letter opening (1:16) and the same one developed in the body of the letter. (chapters 9-11). This means that the blessings of salvation received by the gentiles come through the Jewish Messiah, which is the fulfillment of the promises made to Israel

²⁹²Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 2: 770.

²⁹³Keck, *Romans*, 368.

²⁹⁴Leander E. Keck, “The Poor among the Saints in the New Testament,” *ZNW* 56 (1965): 110-29; Nickle, *The Collection*, 122-26.

²⁹⁵Schreiner, *Romans*, 777; Osborne, *Romans*, 397.

²⁹⁶Keck, “The Poor among the Saints,” 129; Nickle, *The Collection*, 119-22; Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 904-05; Mosher, *God’s Power, Jesus’ Faith*, 307.

in the OT Scriptures (1:2; 1:16; 11:17-24; 15:7-8).²⁹⁷ These expressions of the gentiles' indebtedness and thankfulness to the Jews will go a long way toward binding them together in brotherly love and cementing their relationship to the advancement of preaching the gospel to the nations. (5) Further, the purpose of the collection that symbolizes the gentile inclusion in the people of God, as McKnight and others have observed, is intended to provoke the Jews to jealousy for their own conversion, so that it will bring Israel to salvation (11:11-24).²⁹⁸ As a result, Paul's bringing of the gentiles' offering to Jerusalem Christians has strategic objectives for his addressees: that this would solidify their bond of love and their unity in the gospel; offer strong evidence to them of his successful mission in the East; and strengthen and support his mission to the nations.

Second, Paul had experienced a passionate desire (ἐπιποθίαν)²⁹⁹ to visit Rome (vv. 22-24, 28-29) for a long time, but "was hindered" (ἐνεκοπτόμην; cf. 1:13)³⁰⁰ by God because of his prior apostolic commission in the East (vv. 19, 23). Now no place (τόπος) remained for preaching the gospel (see v. 19 above). Only one last thing that will delay his desire to visit Rome and then move on to Spain was his visit to Jerusalem to deliver

²⁹⁷Becker, *Paul the Apostle*, 72.

²⁹⁸Scot McKnight, "Collection for the Saints," *DPL*, 146; Schreiner, *Romans*, 776-77. For more details concerning the issue of 'the salvation of the gentiles provoking the Jews to jealousy, so that the latter would be saved,' see Richard H. Bell, *Provoked to Jealousy: The Origin and Purpose of the Jealousy Motif in Romans 9-11*, WUNT 2.63 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1994); idem, *The Irrevocable Call of God: An Inquiry into Paul's Theology of Israel*, WUNT 184 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 243-56.

²⁹⁹Paul reiterated this emotion, employing the similar word ἐπιποθῶ as in the letter opening (1:11).

³⁰⁰The term ἐνεκοπτόμην as used here is a passive (cf. ἐκωλύθην is also passive in 1:13), which denotes a divine passive. For this reason, Paul was hindered by God (so Schreiner, *Romans*, 774), not by Satan (so Origen, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, Book 10: 12.6), as Barrett (*The Epistle to the Romans*, 254) has suggested based on 1 Thess 2:18.

the collection for the poor among the saints (15:28-29). Paul's eagerness to visit Rome is not for seeking permanent residency, but for merely a brief stay to be helped and refreshed by their company (15:24, 32; cf. 1:12). The primary function of visiting Rome and for the writing of the letter is requesting their support for his Spanish mission.³⁰¹ Paul's usage of the verb *προπέμπω* (literally to mean "to send forth," so accompany; escort, Acts 20:38; 21:5) practically denotes "to assist someone in making a journey, *send on one's way* with food, money, by arranging for companions, means of travel, etc."³⁰² Consequently, this verb could indicate a technical term for early Christian missionary support.³⁰³ He has already operated his missionary work with such methods in the East, particularly by making the Antioch church his support base. Evidently, Paul has a similar plan for establishing the Roman church as the support base for his projected missionary work in Spain and beyond. He hoped to be helped on his way (v. 24) and to be refreshed in their company (v. 32), so that the Roman church would support his future missionary work in Spain and beyond with funds, coworkers, and certainly prayers. Paul does not mention this request for aid at the beginning of the letter. He expected that this letter will furnish a concrete grasp of his gospel for—and solidify his bond of love with—the

³⁰¹Stuhlmacher, *Paul's Letter to the Romans*, 240.

³⁰²E.g., 1 Macc 12:4; 1 Esdr 4:47; Acts 15:3; 1 Cor 16:6, 11; 2 Cor 1:16; Titus 3:13; 3 John 6. See BDAG, 873.2.

³⁰³So Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 2: 769; Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 398; Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, 872; Stuhlmacher, *Paul's Letter to the Romans*, 411; Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 901; Schreiner, *Romans*, 774. Moo additionally notes, "What kind of support Paul hoped for is not specified. In keeping with the basic meaning of the verb—'accompany,' 'escort'—he might be hoping for co-workers to join him in the work. Help with the customs and languages of the territory may also be included; and almost certainly financial and logistical support" (Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 901 n. 26).

Roman church (e.g., see Paul's letter to the Philippians 4:10-20).³⁰⁴

Paul plans to go to Spain, passing through Rome on his way after a successful visit to Jerusalem. This plan of going to Spain for evangelization is not cited in the letter opening or in the body; elsewhere in Paul's letters; or in Acts. The name appears just twice in verses 24 and 28. It is true that this plan is in keeping with his calling—as the apostle to the gentiles—to take the gospel to new regions. Although it cannot be proven whether Paul had ever gone to Spain, yet the early Christian evidences are not scant in favor of the apostle's visit to Spain and preaching the gospel there.³⁰⁵ For example, the evidence of his release from the second letter of Paul to Timothy,³⁰⁶ the testimony of Clement of Rome,³⁰⁷ the Acts of Peter,³⁰⁸ and the Muratorian Canon³⁰⁹ is some of the significant evidence besides Jerome, who spent his early years in Rome. According to such evidence, Paul was set free by Nero that he might preach the gospel “also in the

³⁰⁴See Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 901-02; Schreiner, *Romans*, 774.

³⁰⁵See Schnabel, *Paul the Missionary*, 115-21.

³⁰⁶The circumstances described in 2 Tim 1:16-17; 4:11, 16 reveal Paul's second Roman imprisonment. This indicates his release during AD 60-62, which enabled him to pursue further missionary work, probably in Spain.

³⁰⁷The most important and early evidence is the testimony of Clement, the third bishop of Rome (cf. Phil 4:3). In his first letter to the Corinthians, which was written in AD 95, Clement asserts, “Seven times he bore chains, he was sent into exile and stoned; he served as a herald in both the East and the West; and he received the noble reputation for his faith. He taught righteousness to the whole world, and came to *the limits of the West*, bearing his witness before the rulers” (1 Clement 5:6-7). For further discussion, see Bruce, *The Letter of Paul to the Romans*, 447-48; Schnabel, *Paul the Missionary*, 116-17.

³⁰⁸The NT apocryphal writing, *Acts of Peter*, which is dated about AD 190, describes Paul's release and his subsequent vision to go to the Spaniards as physician. The brethren, who came to faith through his preaching, lamented because they would not see Paul again (*Acts of Peter*, 1).

³⁰⁹Murator's “Fragment on the Canon,” which was written about AD 170-200, mentions, “. . . the departure of Paul from the city [of Rome] when he journeyed to Spain.” (*Muratorian Canon*, lines 35-39; see Bruce Metzger, *The Canon of the New Testament* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987], 305-07.)

regions of the West.” In addition, Chrysostom and others, affirmed that the apostle went to Spain following his imprisonment in Rome. After successfully delivering the collection when Paul comes to Rome, he is supposed to only pass through that city on the way to Spain after being refreshed in their company “for a while” (ἀπὸ μέρους, v. 24).³¹⁰ This is different from his purpose as it is stated in 1:15, which reads that he is “eager to preach the gospel also to you who are at Rome.”³¹¹

There is seeming conflict in these statements, which some scholars have interpreted to mean that Paul’s purpose in writing Romans does not lie in the Roman believers themselves, but that he only uses them for some other ultimate goal, as Weima points out.³¹² Such a conclusion, complained Weima, contradicts the central focus of the letter opening, thanksgiving and parousia, which is “Paul’s divine calling to preach the gospel *to the Roman Christians* and not to some distant community in the east (Jerusalem) or west (Spain).”³¹³ Weima is correct in affirming Neil Elliott,³¹⁴ that there is not any conflict between Paul’s desire to preach the gospel (1:15) and his stop over for refreshment (15:32) and help (15:24), because Paul has already fulfilled his desire to

³¹⁰Hints at a very short stay; see BDAG, 633.

³¹¹Cf. 1:15. See above 67-68.

³¹²Weima, “Gospel in Paul,” 357-58. Moo and others suggest that it does not have to press too hard for finding any conflict between these two statements because Paul still has plenty of opportunity both to preach the gospel and to be refreshed in their company (Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 901; Osborne, *Romans*, 395).

³¹³Weima, “Gospel in Paul,” 358 (emphasis his).

³¹⁴N. Elliott, *The Rhetoric of Romans: Argumentative Constraint and Strategy and Paul’s Dialogue with Judaism*, JSNTSup 45 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990), 87. So Dahl, “The Missionary Theology in the Epistle to the Romans,” 77; Bowers, “Fulfilling the Gospel,” 196; Jervis, *The Purpose of Romans*, 109.

preach the gospel in the body of the letter.³¹⁵ Weima's conclusion, however, contradicts both Elliott and the thoughts expressed in the "parousia:" Elliott, because he writes "‘Evangelizing’ the Romans is absent from Paul's future plans, . . .";³¹⁶ and "parousia" (15:14-33) because Paul does not mention here his preaching the gospel in Rome due to the fact that he will just pass through on the way to Spain after being refreshed in their company "for a while." Paul's use of the verbs διαπορεύεσθαι (to pass through) and θεᾶσθαι (to get to know) and emphatic πρῶτον and ἀπὸ μέρους in verse 24 emphatically indicates this conclusion. Käsemann comments, "Paul does not see in Rome either a goal of conquest or a field of evangelization,"³¹⁷ because his central focus—both in the letter opening and closing—is evangelizing and bringing about the "obedience of all the nations (gentiles)" according to his apostolic commission. Spain fulfills that purpose in Paul's immediate plans.

Summary. Paul's statements in this concluding section of the letter to the Romans (15:14-33) show that he envisioned a similar missionary purpose as in the letter

³¹⁵Weima, "Gospel in Paul," 358. Schreiner (*Romans*, 55 n. 13; 775 n. 6) has questioned this proposition for two reasons: First, if Paul wants to preach the gospel exclusively through a letter, then he could have done it earlier because Paul desired to preach the gospel in Rome for many years (1:13; 15:23). Secondly, according to 1:8-15, Schreiner thinks that "the preaching of the gospel that Paul envisioned could be done only in person." Otherwise it will "undercut Paul's emphasis on the necessity of his personal presence." However, this criticism is unnecessary because Paul longed to preach the gospel in Rome for many years, and he hoped to discharge this task in person. But he was prevented by God for his unfinished missionary task in the East that kept him extremely busy. Most probably this long desire for a personal visit and his busy schedule for reaching every new territory in the East dissuaded him from writing earlier. Perhaps this long delay also helped him to articulate the content of his gospel more clearly, efficiently, and wisely. The letter's immediate success and its continued missionary effects for more than two thousand years are the direct evidence for it. Furthermore, during his long delay, Rome was already evangelized by others, a strong church was founded, and Paul already commended their faith in the Lord (1:8; 15:14). Now he needed only to stop over for some mutual benefits and assistance for his further mission to the West.

³¹⁶Elliott, *The Rhetoric of Romans*, 87 (emphasis his).

³¹⁷Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 397-98.

opening. This is preaching the gospel among all the nations (τὰ ἔθνη, 1:5, 13; 15:16, 18, 27), which is a vision for worldwide mission. This was not his invention; rather, he was just fulfilling what God has planned long before to save the nations. Paul did not choose this for himself; but God selected him and commissioned him as a minister for preaching the gospel to the nations. Paul reaffirms that the goal of his commission to the gospel of God is securing “the obedience of all the nations,” which he states in the letter frame. Paul has declared that he has already partly achieved his commission in the East. Evangelization and planting churches among all the nations of the world known to him, however, is not yet completed. According to Paul’s guiding principle, his passion and desire are evangelizing and planting churches in the new areas where Christ has not yet been known. Hence, he hopes to go to Spain and beyond, making Rome the support base for his next mission project. With this purpose in mind, Paul composed this letter to the Roman Christians to gather their support for his mission to the nations.

Paul’s Co-workers in the Gospel of His Mission (Rom 16:1-24)

According to his epistolary conventions, Paul normally ends his letters with a series of greetings, which are often addressed both to people in the church and individuals who are friends of the church. Besides greetings, he includes hortatory elements and grace benediction. Though each of these elements is found as well in the closings of Paul’s other letters,³¹⁸ with some variations, the closing of Romans 16³¹⁹

³¹⁸For the structure of a typical Pauline letter closing, see Weima, “The Gospel in Rome,” 359. For a detailed comparative study of a Pauline letter closing, see Weima, *Neglected Endings*, 77-155.

³¹⁹For a detailed structure of the closing of Rom 16, see Weima, “The Gospel in Rome,” 360.

comprises several distinctive features. Characteristics of this chapter certainly have similar missionary functions as in the previous section, along with the letter opening.

Paul begins with a letter of commendation (16:1-2) on behalf of Phoebe, who must have been the bearer of Paul's letter³²⁰ to the Roman believers. In fact, he introduced her as "our sister," "a deacon of the church of Cenchreae," and "a helper to many, including Paul." Besides these, her name infers that she was a gentile, and her introduction as "a helper to many" (προστάτις) suggests that she belonged to a wealthy upper-class group.³²¹ Perhaps these commendations about Phoebe were made to impress the Roman believers. This may have resulted in her acceptance by the Roman believers, may have served several objectives: that will indicate, in some sense, acceptance of Paul; that his apostolic authority and gospel message will find acceptance among the Roman believers; and that he can hope to receive support for future missionary work.

Second, Paul employs two greeting lists: (1) greetings to individuals and groups (16:3-16); and (2) greetings from people (16:21-24). Paul encourages believers to "greet one another" in other letters, too (e.g., 1 Thess 5:26; 1 Cor 16:20; 2 Cor 13:12; Phil 4:21; Titus 3:15). When the Romans greeting list is compared with the greetings of the other Pauline letters, several distinctive features are evident to the reader. One striking feature of the first list is its excessive length. Paul sends seventeen greetings to

³²⁰Such practices were common in Paul's time, e.g., Timothy (1 Cor 4:17; 16:10) and Titus (2 Cor 8:16-18; 12:18) to the Corinthians; Tychicus to the Ephesians and Colossians (Eph 6:21-22; Col 4:7-8); Epaphroditus to the Philippians (Phil 2:25-30); and Silvanus to the congregation in Asia Minor (1 Pet 5:12).

³²¹See Stott, *The Message of Romans*, 395; Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 916.

no less than twenty-eight individuals, twenty-six of whom he names.³²² The work of Bruce, Lampe and others help identify these names in detail.³²³ The following breakdown into tables, though, will add a different perspective. As shown in the tabular format below, many of these names are identified as Paul’s former “co-workers”³²⁴ (see Table 5), who are settled in Rome. Others are friends and acquaintances (see Table 6) whom Paul knew personally, or heard about them.³²⁵ The majority of them are gentiles from

Table 5: Paul’s co-workers in his mission

Reference	Names of Co-workers	Paul’s Commendatory Descriptions
16:3, 4	Prisca and Aquila	“my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, who risked their necks for my life”
16:6	Mary	“who has worked hard for you”
16:7	Andronicus and Junia	“my fellow prisoners ... well-known to the apostles”
16:9	Urbanus	“our fellow worker in Christ”
16:12a	Tryphaena and Tryphosa	“workers in the Lord”
16:12b	Persis	“who has worked hard in the Lord”

³²²Paul’s excessive mention of many names elicits the question of how Paul knew their names and circumstances because he neither established the church nor visited it. Paul, undoubtedly, had known some of the believers previously in other churches who had now settled in Rome, like Priscilla and Aquila, a number of co-workers, and others. It was quite common to travel among various places of the Roman Empire in those days, which brought many people into contact with Pauline churches. It is possible that Paul did not know everyone he named, but rather heard of their reputation (see Schreiner, *Romans*, 790). He also could have known other names from recently received reports from Rome, informing him about the present situation, including important Roman church leaders (Barnett, *Romans*, 365).

³²³Bruce, *The Letter of Paul to the Romans*, 257-62; Lampe, “The Roman Christians,” 216-30.

³²⁴The Greek term *συνεργός*, which is translated as “co-workers,” is used for those involved in Christian ministry, e.g. Timothy (1Thess 3:2; Rom 16:21); Titus (2 Cor 8:23); Epaphroditus (Phil 2:25); Euodia and Syntyche (Phil 4:3); Prisca and Aquila (Rom 16:3-4); Urbanus (Rom 16:9); and others. Paul also identifies himself with others as “co-worker” (1 Cor 3:9).

³²⁵Note as well that Paul employs specific commendatory words for all those greeted in 16:1-13, indicating that he knew them personally, and omitted those greeted in 16:14-15, perhaps suggesting that he just heard about them (see Schreiner, *Romans*, 790-91).

Table 6: List of Paul's friends and acquaintances

References	Names	Paul's Commendatory Descriptions
16:5b	Epaenetus	"my beloved," "the first convert to Christ in Asia"
16:8a	Ampliatius	"my beloved in the Lord"
16:9b	Stachys	"my beloved"
16:10a	Apelles	"who is approved in Christ"
16:10b	Aristobulus, his family	---
16:11a	Herodion	"my kinsman"
16:11b	Narcissus and family	"those in the Lord"
16:13	Rufus	"chosen in the Lord"
16:13	His mother	"who has been a mother to me as well"
16:14	Asyncritus	"the brothers who are with them"
16:14	Phlegon	
16:14	Hermes	
16:14	Patrobas	
16:14	Hermas	
16:15	Philologus and Julia	"all the saints who are with them"
16:15	Nereus	
16:15	His sister	
16:15	Olympas	

Table 7: List of women mentioned in the greeting

Reference	List of Women	Paul's Commendatory Descriptions
16:3	Prisca	Along with her husband, Aquila, she was Paul's fellow worker in Christ Jesus ... risked her neck for his life.
16:6	Mary	"who has worked hard for you"
16:7	Junia ³²⁶	Along with her husband, Andronicus, she was Paul's relative, fellow prisoner, well-known to the apostles, and was in Christ before him.
16:12a	Tryphena	Possibly sisters. Paul mentions them as "those workers in the Lord."
16:12a	Tryphosa	
16:12b	Persis	"who has worked hard in the Lord"
16:13	Rufus' mother	"who has been a mother to me as well"
16:15	Julia	"all the saints who are with them"
16:15	Nereus' sister	

³²⁶The identity of Junia(s) is debated regarding whether the name is that of a man or of a woman. The most recent majority opinion, though, is in favor of a female name (see Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 533; Lampe, "The Roman Christians," 223-24; Stott, *The Message of Romans*, 396; Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 922-23; Schreiner, *Romans*, 795-96; Osborne, *Romans*, 406-07). Many feel that they were husband and wife because her name appears with Andronicus. (So Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 737-38.)

Table 8: List of house churches/groups identified in the greeting

Reference	Names/Groups	Paul's Descriptions
16:5a	Prisca and Aquila	"the church in their house"
16:10	Aristobulus	"those who belong to the family"
16:11	Narcissus	"those in the Lord who belong to the family"
16:14	Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas	"the brothers who are with them"
16:15	Philologus, Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas	"all the saints who are with them"

Table 9: List of Jewish people identified in the greeting

Reference	List of Names	Paul's Descriptions
16:3	(1) Prisca (2) and Aquila	(Jews, Acts 18:2)
16:6	(3) Mary	(a Jewish name)
16:7	(4) Andronicus (5) and Junia	"my kinsmen"
16:10	(6) Aristobulus	(a Jewish name)
16:11	(7) Herodion	"my kinsman"
16:13	(8) Rufus (9) and his mother	(Jews, Mark 15:21)

various ethnic groups,³²⁷ while others are Jewish (Table 9). Roman Christianity, however, does not comprise only different ethnic groups, but the names also reflect various social groups among them.³²⁸ The greeting list additionally reveals a significant number of women—at least nine of them (Table 7). Three of the nine are Paul's co-workers, about whom he spoke very highly. Besides these features of the greeting list, Roman

³²⁷Even though these names reflect various ethnic groups—such as Greek, Latin, and Roman, the definite ethnic background of each of these names will be difficult to determine because people from various ethnic groups frequently used to acquire more than one name when they used to travel from one city to another in the first century. (Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 531).

³²⁸Though the social status of each and everyone in this list is uncertain, among them were slaves, freedmen, freedwomen, and distinguished people in the Roman church. Several contemporary inscriptions indicate that Ampliatus, Stachys, those from the families of Aristobulus and Narcissus, Asyncritus, Phlegon, Patrobas, Hermes, Philologus and Julia, Nereus and Olympas were common names for slaves (cf. Lampe, "The Roman Christians," 228).

Christianity was composed of “house churches” and “families” (Table 8).

The above tabular analyses reveal distinctive features of the greeting list. One distinctive feature of the Roman church was its diverse nature.³²⁹ The Roman Christians were constituted by a variety of ethnic and social groups as well as gender. Five observations could be made about the composition of the Roman Christianity: (1) Nine Jewish names can be identified in the greeting list (Table 9).³³⁰ (2) The majority of the names are gentile ones, confirming that the Roman Church was composed of mostly gentile Christians. (3) The Greek, Latin, and Roman names in the greeting list suggest that the gentile Christians were made up of various ethnic groups. (4) The majority of those names are those of slaves, but they became “freedmen” and “freedwomen” or the offspring of slaves/freedmen. (5) Besides Phoebe, the bearer of the letter, there are nine references to women, indicating their prominence in Paul’s mission to the nations.

In spite of this diverse composition, the most significant feature of the greeting, however, is the deep experience of “the unity of the church.” According to Morris, “The effect of the whole list is to emphasize the universality of the church.”³³¹ In addition, this implies the universal importance of Paul’s mission. The churches that met in the houses of different people were not segregated by ethnicity, society or gender. Paul’s motto for local churches was “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3:28). The evidence of this unity is found in his usage of commendatory languages, a

³²⁹See Stott, *The Message of Romans*, 395-97.

³³⁰Lampe (“The Roman Christians,” 225) maintains that Mary is a gentile woman because the Latin name “Maria” was common in Rome, while the Hebrew “Maria” was rather uncommon.

³³¹Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 531.

feature that is not found in any other letters of Paul, but is unique to the Romans greeting. He greets his co-workers and friends “in Christ (Jesus)” (16:3, 7, 9, and 10) and “in the Lord” (16:8, 11, 12x2, and 13), and addressed them as “my beloved” (16:5b, 8, 9, 12b). Moreover, Paul identifies with their experiences, using the language of “fellow workers” (16:3, 9) and fellow sufferers (16:4, 7). He expresses his affection for them with family language, such as “sister” and “brother” (16:1, 14, cf. 17). Evidently, this language reflects the common link among the diverse people of the Roman Christian community. In fact, the whole greeting list communicates “the solidarity and affection between those who belong to the Lord,” as Schreiner points out.³³² This is consistent with his earlier exhortation in chapters 14-15. Furthermore, Paul’s commendatory language in the greetings emphasizes his personal and strong relations with numerous individuals who are not only important members in the Roman Christian community, but renowned and outstanding leaders of the Roman congregations, as well. The greetings to such people indicate two things: First of all, many among the Roman congregations either followed or championed Paul’s gospel, which he was called to preach and has expounded in the earlier chapters as a reminder to them. Second, Paul indirectly endorses himself and his gospel, and the individuals whom he names are in accord with his teaching.³³³ Additionally, this sort of greeting is read aloud to the assembled congregation. This would result in the public recognition of those Christians in Rome whom Paul knew would make others think favorably of him and show that he already has significant

³³²See Schreiner, *Romans*, 790.

³³³Gamble, *Textual History*, 92; Lampe, “The Roman Christians,” 218; Jervis, *The Purpose of Romans*, 151-52; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 734; Weima, “The Gospel in Rome,” 362; Schreiner, *Romans*, 792.

support behind him.³³⁴ For this reason, Paul's usage of lengthy greetings plays a vital role in backing his global mission strategy in Romans. It also helps to secure their acceptance when he would actually arrive in Rome and seek their support for his immediate missionary work in Spain³³⁵ and beyond.

Paul concludes his long list of individual greetings by using the phrase that "all the churches of Christ greet you" (16:16b), which is quite significant because such an expansive greeting is found nowhere else in Paul's greetings. With the reference to *αἱ ἐκκλησίαι πᾶσαι*, Paul means "all the churches" with which he is connected or over which he holds authority.³³⁶ Three observations can be made here: (1) Paul's reference to "all the churches" indicates to the Roman church that all the Eastern churches officially support him and his gospel, and thus they are behind him in his global mission.³³⁷ (2) Moreover, the greeting implies his challenge to the Roman believers "to join these churches in recognizing the authority of Paul's apostleship and his gospel."³³⁸ (3) Through the expansive greeting from all these churches, Paul communicates to the Roman believers "the universality of his gospel."³³⁹ Even Paul's sending of the greeting from his co-workers in Corinth (16:21-23) illustrates a similar effect upon the Roman believers concerning his authority as an apostle and his gospel message. Therefore, Paul

³³⁴Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 918.

³³⁵*Ibid.*, 917-18.

³³⁶Dunn, *Romans, 9-16*, 899; Stuhlmacher, *Paul's Letter to the Romans*, 251; Schreiner, *Romans*, 798.

³³⁷For example, see Schreiner, *Romans*, 798; Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, 899. Cf. Weima, "The Gospel in Rome," 363.

³³⁸Weima, "The Gospel in Rome," 363.

³³⁹Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 232; Schreiner, *Romans*, 798.

summons the Roman believers to share in his international mission because Paul can establish such a strong credibility of the authority of his apostleship and for the gospel that he is called to preach.

To his concern for the unity and solidarity of the Roman church, Paul adds some warning and exhortation (16:17-20), which may serve a similar purpose. Some find in this warning a sudden modification of his warm greetings into harsh admonitions, which change is inconsistent with the remainder of his letter. Consequently, the authenticity of this passage has been questioned.³⁴⁰ This assessment is unwarranted, though, because Paul appreciates their faith as he continues to strengthen his relationship with them.³⁴¹ Building upon the solidarity and affection of the greeting list, his exhortation (as he used it earlier in Romans 12:1; 15:30) affectionately addresses them as “brothers”; attests that they have learned the proper teaching (16:17); and reaffirms that their faithful obedience to the gospel is known throughout the world (16:19; cf. also 1:8; 15:14). Furthermore, he rejoices over their faithfulness to the Lord (16:19). Along with these positive notes, Paul also admonishes them to be careful about those who proclaim the gospel differently, especially with the opponents of his gospel. They are characterized as those “who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine” (16:17). Perhaps Paul was reminded of the dangers facing the churches he has established in the East. In no time, those opponents of his gospel may come to Rome and destabilize the unity of the Roman believers (cf. 16:3-16; 15:7).³⁴² This indicates that these opponents of

³⁴⁰For a discussion about authenticity of the passage, see above in 37-39. See also Seifrid, *Justification by Faith*, 198-99.

³⁴¹Weima, “The Gospel in Rome,” 363.

³⁴²Schreiner, *Romans*, 801; contra Barrett, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 261.

the gospel are from the outside and could pose a great threat to the unity and the teaching of the church.³⁴³ It does not mean that Paul has already received any fresh news of the presence of his opponents in Rome, or that he is aware of their arrival in Rome.³⁴⁴ Maybe Paul anticipates a possible danger to the Roman churches,³⁴⁵ one that will remain until God crushes the Satan under the feet of the believers forever (16:20a). Many understood this language as an allusion to God's promise of crushing the Satan in Genesis 3:15,³⁴⁶ which promises victory over the serpent and his seed.³⁴⁷ The "God of peace" will bring in His peace—the fulfillment of His saving promises that began with the promise given in the Garden of Eden. Hence, Paul's admonition to maintain unity and solidarity among the Roman believers, as well as His assurance about God's act of using them in fulfilling His plan, demonstrates his apostolic authority over them. This could be interpreted as yet another intentional attempt on Paul's part to establish his relationship with the Roman believers for supporting his world mission.

The Doxology: The Summary of Paul's Gospel to the Nations (16:25-27)

Besides the lengthy greeting list and the warning and exhortation, the presence of a doxology³⁴⁸ is a feature that is unique to the letter closing of Romans. In fact, Paul

³⁴³Seifrid, *Justification by Faith*, 199-201. This is reminiscent of Paul's mention of the potential dissension between 'weak' and 'strong,' which Paul has addressed earlier (see 14:1-15:13).

³⁴⁴So Seifrid, *Justification by Faith*, 199; Schreiner, *Romans*, 801; contra Barrett, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 261.

³⁴⁵Lampe, "The Roman Christians," 221; Seifrid, *Justification by Faith*, 199-200.

³⁴⁶Cf. Jewish parallel: *Jub.* 23:29; *T. Mos.* 10:1; *T. Levi* 18:37; *T. Sim.* 6:6.

³⁴⁷Schlatter, *Romans: The Righteousness of God*, 277; Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 932-33; Schreiner, *Romans*, 804-05.

³⁴⁸For a discussion about the authenticity of the passage, see above in 39-41.

articulates a powerful and fitting summary of what is said earlier in the letter: his gospel. He summarizes its central themes and relates them in such a manner as echoing the central purpose (s) of his letter—that is, “preaching of the gospel, which was hidden for ages, but now revealed in Jesus Christ, and made known by the eternal God through the OT Scriptures for the obedience (salvation) of all the nations.” It recapitulates this very purpose of the letter that is mentioned in the opening (especially 1:1-7), thus framing the letter with the theme of preaching the gospel that will result in the obedience of all the nations.³⁴⁹ Several observations from this passage may be noted as evidence of this fact.

First, Paul begins his doxology with an acknowledgment of God’s power. God’s power (δύναμις) is an essential feature of the letter’s argument (see 1:4, 16, 20; 4:21; 9:17, 22; 11:23; 14:4; 15:13). According to Paul, “Now to him who is able to strengthen you” (τῷ δὲ δυναμένῳ (cf. δύναμις) ὑμᾶς στηρίζαι), referring to the only God who has the power to strengthen them. He refers to God here, not by naming Him, but by characterizing Him as the one “who is able to strengthen you.”³⁵⁰ Paul assures the Roman Christians that God is not an abstract being, but He is a “God who acts” in the lives of believers, which is a theme that will be discussed in the following chapter.

Second, Paul claims that God is able to strengthen according to “my gospel” and “the preaching of Jesus Christ,” demonstrating that the basis of this strength is the power of God according to the gospel that he was called to proclaim (1:1). If the gospel is

³⁴⁹For a striking similarity of the language and themes between the doxology and the other parts of the letter, see p. 40, Table 3.

³⁵⁰Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 938. In Romans, Paul consistently identifies God as the one who acts; He is not just an abstract being. (For details see next chapter.)

the power of God to save (1:16), it is additionally God's power to strengthen (στηρίζω)³⁵¹ them (1:11), recalling Paul's original themes in the letter opening. The references to "my gospel" (1:1, 9, 16; 2:16; 10:16; 11:28; 15:16, 19) is the same gospel that Paul was set apart to preach. "The preaching of Jesus Christ" means "preaching about Jesus Christ" (Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ³⁵²), indicating further the meaning of the gospel. This is reminiscent of the first three verses of the prescript, in which Paul describes himself as "set apart for the gospel of God . . . concerning his (God's) Son." The καὶ in the sentence is epexegetic (κατὰ τὸ εὐαγγέλιον μου καὶ τὸ κήρυγμα Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ).³⁵³ As a result, both of these phrases are not two different things, but are one and the same thing, because the gospel is preaching about Jesus Christ.

Third, the doxology conveys the continuity of Paul's gospel with the message of the OT, which once again recalls the statement of the letter opening (1:2-4; also 3:21).³⁵⁴ This gospel, though, is connected to "the revelation of the mystery," emphasizing the fact that "the gospel is revealed truth"³⁵⁵ (1:17, 18; 2:5; 8:18). Paul did

³⁵¹The term means "to strengthen," or "to establish" (BDAG, 945.2). It is almost a technical term for nurturing new converts and strengthening young churches (e.g., Acts 14:21; 15:41; 18:23). Paul employs this term in his letters in relation to "making them firm, strong, and stable, whether in their faith (against error), in their holiness (against temptation), or in their courage (against persecution)." E.g., 1 Cor 1:8; 2 Cor 1:21; Col 2:7; 1 Thess 3:2, 13; 2 Thess 2:17; 3:7. See Stott, *The Message of Romans*, 403.

³⁵²The genitive is clearly the objective genitive (Sanday and Headlam, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 433; Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 240; Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 2:810; Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 425-26; Dunn, *Romans*, 914; Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 938).

³⁵³So Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 2:810; Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, 914.

³⁵⁴Weima, "The Gospel in Rome," 365.

³⁵⁵Stott, *The Message of Romans*, 404. The revelatory nature of the gospel is also stressed in the letter opening, in which Paul declares that "for in it (the gospel) the righteousness of God is revealed" (1:17).

not invent something new. It is, however, a mystery (μυστηρίον), meaning “a plan of God that was previously kept secret for long ages, but now only revealed and made known to us through the prophetic writings of the OT.”³⁵⁶ That hidden plan concerns all the gentiles, who were to be called to hear and obey the gospel of God by believing in His Son, Jesus Christ.

Fourth, the doxology focuses on the evangelization of all nations. The promise made to Abraham that all nations would be blessed (Gen 12:3; 18:18; 22:18) is fulfilled in the gospel being preached “for the obedience of faith to all the nations” (εἰς ὑπακοὴν πίστεως εἰς πάντα τὰ ἔθνη).³⁵⁷ This brings to mind another direct verbal connection with the Romans prescript to “bring about the obedience of faith among all the nations” (1:5, εἰς ὑπακοὴν πίστεως ἐν πᾶσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν; see also 15:18). This phrase points out God’s purpose and goal (εἰς) in revealing the mystery of the gospel to all the nations (1:5; 11:22-25; 16:4).³⁵⁸ It links not only with the opening verses of Romans, but additionally to the common purpose and goal of Paul’s mission—that is, preaching the gospel to all nations. “According to the command of the eternal God” refers to the universal commission of God for preaching the gospel to the nations.

Finally, Paul concludes the doxology by ascribing praise to God. Schreiner has

³⁵⁶E.g., God’s promise to Abraham in Genesis 12:3: “. . . and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” For a similar view, see Eph 3:5, 9; Col 1:26; 2 Tim 1:9-10; Titus 1:2-3; cf. 1 Pet 1:20.

³⁵⁷The phrase εἰς πάντα τὰ ἔθνη goes with εἰς ὑπακοὴν πίστεως, not with the participle γνωρισθέντος, which is dependent on μυστηρίου. So Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 2:812; Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, 916; Schreiner, *Romans*, 815; NIV. In most translations, however, γνωρισθέντος belongs with εἰς πάντα τὰ ἔθνη. So RSV; NRSV; ESV; NAB; NASV; NJB; NKJV.

³⁵⁸Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 2:812; Weima, “The Gospel in Rome,” 365; Schreiner, *Romans*, 815.

rightly pointed out that “the ascription of glory to God” is the overriding theme in the doxology.³⁵⁹ This assessment is true because God is referenced three times in the three verses of the doxology. In verse 25, God is the one who “is able to strengthen” the believers, referring to the power of God. Verse 26 reads that the gospel “has been made known . . . according to the command of the eternal God” (κατ’ ἐπιταγὴν τοῦ αἰωνίου θεοῦ). Paul’s emphasis is on God’s ordination and determination that the gospel would be known at this specific time in salvation history. The stress on God’s sovereignty is pronounced because “the eternal God” decided that now is the time in which the mystery would be revealed. The word “eternal” underlines the truth that God exists through all the ages. God has ordained the time in which the prophetic Scriptures will be fulfilled. Finally, in verse 27, the phrase “to the only and wise God” (cf. 3:29-30; 11:33) could also mean “to God who alone is wise.”³⁶⁰ While Paul discusses “the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God” (Rom 11:33; 1 Cor 1:21; 2:7), he does not characterize God as wise (as in Jude 25; Sir 1:8; 4 Mac 1:12). “To the only wise God be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ!” is an appropriate ending because, as an apostle to the gentiles, Paul focuses on bringing glory to God through the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It signifies the centrality of God in Paul’s gospel, which concerns His Son, Jesus Christ. Thus, it is ultimately the God, who is the basis of Paul’s message and his mission, who deserves the glory. Therefore, Paul begins and ends his letter with the identity of the one true God in the gospel that he was commissioned to preach to all the nations.

³⁵⁹Schreiner, *Romans*, 815.

³⁶⁰Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 2:814.

Summary

Paul's doxology of praise, which is the final unit of the epistolary framework, provides a carefully constructed summary of the major themes of his letter (see 40, Table 3), and hence offers convincing evidence to the authenticity and the integrity of the letter. Paul's gospel is the power of God that saves and strengthens. This gospel is the mystery of God's power, once hidden and now revealed (blessing of the gentiles, Christ's death and resurrection). God foretold—through the prophets in the OT Scriptures—concerning Christ and the inclusion of all the nations among the people of God. The goal of the proclamation of the gospel is summoning all the nations to respond to the obedience of faith. Consequently, this deliberate recapitulation of the principal themes illustrates that Paul's overarching purpose of writing the letter is the same as it is declared in the letter opening: that is, proclaiming the gospel to all the nations and bringing about their obedience of faith.

Conclusion

The epistolary frame of Romans furnishes a coherent and persuasive understanding of Paul's purpose in writing this letter. The letter opening and the letter closing of Romans affirm his divine apostolic commission and authority for preaching the gospel to *all the nations*—including the Jews and the gentiles, without any discrimination. As the apostle to the gentiles, he was eager to utilize every opportunity for winning new converts. The strategy of his mission to the nations focused on the conversion of people no matter where they live or who they are—as his repeated statements in both the letter opening and the closing reveal. Paul skillfully establishes the universal significance of the gospel that he was called to preach to all peoples. This is the

same gospel (vv. 1-5), which is the saving power of God both to the Jew and to the nations, that Paul expounds thoroughly (1:18-11:36). There are implications (12:1-15:13) in the body of the letter for strengthening the faith of Roman believers, and building their trust in his apostleship and message, which will result in support for his worldwide mission. God is at the heart of Paul's mission. Paul himself was set apart for "the Gospel of God" (1:1; 15:16; cf. 16:25), and it concerns God's Son. He understood his mission of bringing gentiles—with their belief in many gods, but not the one true God—to the obedience of faith "for the sake of his (God's) name" (1:5; 15:18; 16:26), and as an offering to God (15:16). The gospel is God's saving power that results in salvation (1:16; 16:25). Paul provides an appropriate ending for the letter by ascribing glory "to the only wise God" through the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Hence, Paul not only begins and ends his letter with the ascription to God, but His identity plays a crucial role throughout the letter that forms the basis of Paul's mission to the nations that will now be discussed.

CHAPTER 3

THE IDENTITY OF GOD: THE THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION OF PAUL'S MISSION

Introduction

The true identity of God is central to the Christian faith. It was essential as well to the missionary context in which Paul ministered and preached the gospel, basically to the gentile world. Paul himself claims that he was called to be an apostle to the gentiles (11:13; Gal 1:16; 2:2, 7, 9), specifically to the entire non-Jewish world,¹ and set apart to preach a message that he characterizes as ‘the gospel of God’ (1:1; 15:16). Hence, he consistently places God at the center of his missionary proclamation.² Paul considers his goal as bringing “about the obedience of faith among all the nations” (1:5; 15:18; 16:26) by the gospel he was commissioned to preach. The gospel that Paul was called to preach is the saving message ‘about God’ and ‘from God,’ and this gospel focuses on God’s Son, Jesus Christ, who is the fulfillment of the promise God made long ago in the Jewish Scriptures (1:2-3).

This God is the one true God, a belief that was common among the Jews and

¹Paul, however, frequently uses statements about God in connection with “Jew and Greek” (e.g., 1:16; 3:29; 9:24) that signify the whole of humanity. Thus, Paul deliberately chooses to emphasize the universal significance of the gospel he was called to preach.

²Richard B. Hays, “The God of Mercy Who Rescues Us from the Present Evil Age,” in *The Forgotten God: Perspectives in Biblical Theology, Essays in Honor of Paul J. Achtemeier on the Occasion of His Seventy-Fifth Birthday*, ed. A. Andrew Das and Frank J. Matera (Louisville: Westminster, 2002), 123.

Christians. Paul, being a Jew, inherited this belief in the one true God and was deeply influenced by the gospel that centers around Christ's death and resurrection (cf. Rom 3:29-30; 4:23-25; Deut 6:4; Gen 15:6). The gentiles believe in many gods and goddesses (polytheism) and worship and serve idols and images (idolatry), though, which is completely different from the God revealed in the OT Scriptures. As Paul begins to unfold his gospel in Romans, he delineates the way in which the gentiles compromised and dishonored the identity of the one true God: "[they] exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles . . . they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever" (1:23-25).

Similarly, Paul reminds the Corinthians (12:2) about their having formerly worshiped "mute idols" (τὰ εἰδωλα τὰ ἄφωνα), and the Galatians (4:8) of their bondage "to beings that by nature are not gods" (τοῖς φύσει μὴ οὖσιν θεοῖς). Even when he writes to the Thessalonians, in the first among the Pauline letters, Paul tells them "how you turned to God from idols (ἀπὸ τῶν εἰδώλων) to serve the living and true God (θεῷ ζῶντι καὶ ἀληθινῷ) and to wait for his Son from heaven" (1 Thess 1:9-10a). This clearly indicates, as Bultmann remarks, that Paul began his missionary preaching with *the proclamation of the one God*³ [italics his]. Such an assertion regarding the priority of God in Paul's

³Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, with a New Introduction by Robert Morgan, 2 vols. in one trans. Kendrick Grobel (New York: Scribner, 1951-55; reprint, Waco: Baylor University Press, 2007), 67. Bultmann, however, while claiming the "assertion about God" is an "assertion about man," that is, "Paul's theology is, at the same time, anthropology," never carries out the discussion of God; rather, he reduces it to the discussion of anthropology as the central focus of Paul's theological thought (esp. see 191). For a critique, see Nils A. Dahl, "The Neglected Factor in New Testament Theology," in *Jesus the Christ: The Historical Origins of Christological Doctrine*, ed. Donald. H. Juel, 153-63 (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 154; Halvor Moxnes, *Theology in Conflict: Studies in Paul's Understanding of God in Romans* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1980), 4. With just a few exceptions, this kind of

missionary preaching among the gentiles is quite significant. He came to believe that this confession of the one true God of the Jews—who is now fully revealed in Jesus Christ, His death, and resurrection—assures the nations of the free gift of salvation and their inclusion in the community of God’s people consisting of Jewish and gentile Christians.

Therefore, in writing to the Roman Christians, Paul inquires, “Is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, since God is one. He will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith” (Rom 3:29-30). Moxnes maintains that Paul employs the statements about God “to end a separation between Jews and non-Jews that traditionally had been justified with theological arguments,” and to “create a new identity for a community consisting of Jewish and non-Jewish Christians.”⁴ Consequently, in the broader perspective of Paul’s mission, his basic beliefs about God—who is the one true God, and the same God who raised Jesus Christ from the dead—are the theological foundation of his mission to the nations. It is in this that the basic elements of Paul’s mission theology can be discovered. Paul, indeed—at various points in Romans and in other letters—connects his concern for the preaching of the gospel to the gentiles and their conversion with basic statements about God. As a result, Paul’s mission in the service of the gospel for all nations can “scarcely be understood apart from a basic belief that the gospel is the work of the One God who created all things.”⁵

apathy toward the scholarly discussion of God in the New Testament, in general, and the Pauline letters, in particular, continued until the first half of the second half of the twentieth century. See above, Chapter 1, 15-18. For a detailed survey, see Neil Richardson, *Paul’s Language about God*, JSNTSup 99 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 9-19.

⁴Moxnes, *Theology in Conflict*, 14.

⁵Terence L. Donaldson, “God,” in *Paul and the Gentiles: Remapping the Apostle’s*

The Theme of God in the Pauline Letters

It has been acknowledged that “the doctrine of God is the central doctrine of Pauline theology.”⁶ “Paul’s great interest is in God,” observes Leon Morris.⁷ He refers to God far more often than do any other NT writers. Of the 1,314 occurrences of the word θεός in the NT, 545 of them belong to Paul, which is more than 40 percent of all the NT references.⁸ This massive occurrence of the word ‘God’ does not mean that Paul’s theology is entirely loose and thus aimless. In fact, Paul does not utilize any sweeping statements or language pertaining to God; instead, he often construes them with a specific statement about God’s character, His actions, and purposes—always connected with his own convictions concerning Christ and His redemptive work for all human beings. He is indeed quite consistent with his use of the word θεός in his epistles.⁹ For this reason, the study of God in Pauline epistles must begin with Paul’s explicit statements with respect to God, which indeed form the basis of his theo-logy.

Convictional World (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1977), 81.

⁶C. Ryrie, *Biblical Theology of the New Testament* (Chicago: Moody, 1982), 203.

⁷Leon Morris, “The Apostle Paul and His God,” in *God Who Is Rich In Mercy*, ed. Peter T. O’Brien and David G. Peterson (Homebach, Australia: AnzeaPublishers, 1986), 165.

⁸Of the 545 occurrences, the nominative θεός occurs 124 times, genitive θεοῦ 292, dative θεῷ 90 and accusative θεόν 39 times, according to the Greek text Novum Testamentum Graece, Nestle-Aland 27th edition. Cf. Morris, “The Apostle Paul and His God,” 165; Richardson, *Paul’s Language about God*, n. 2, 21.

⁹See the essays by Morris on “The Apostle Paul and His God,” 165-78; and “The Theme of Romans,” in *Apostolic History and the Gospel: Biblical and Historical Essays Presented to F. F. Bruce on His 60th Birthday*, ed. W. W. Gasque and R. P. Martin (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), 252-63; Richardson, *Paul’s Language about God*. See also Hays, “The God of Mercy Who Rescues Us from the Present Evil Age,” 123-43; and Donaldson, “God,” in *Paul and the Gentiles*, 81-106.

Very frequently, Paul employs the term *θεός* with God as either the subject¹⁰ or the object (or both) of the action.¹¹ He applies *θεός* with various great biblical themes in relation to God himself—His nature and action; for instance, the ‘oneness’ of God, His righteousness, eternal existence, wisdom, knowledge, love, grace, mercy, peace, hope, glory, faithfulness, truthfulness, promise, kingdom, church, law, Spirit, His Son Jesus, wrath, judgment, and so on.¹² Almost all these themes used with *θεός*, in which *θεός* is expressed in the genitive (292 times), refer either to the subjective, the objective genitive, or both.¹³ Then there are examples of statements with regard to God in relation to

¹⁰E.g., *ὁ θεὸς γὰρ αὐτοῖς ἐφανερώσεν* (Rom 1:19); *παρέδωκεν αὐτοὺς ὁ θεός* (Rom 1:24, 26, 28); *ὁ θεός λογιζέται δικαιοσύνην χωρὶς ἔργων* (Rom 4:6); *τὰ μωρὰ τοῦ κόσμου ἐξελέξατο ὁ θεός* (1 Cor 1:27, cf. v. 28); *ἰλαρὸν γὰρ δότην ἀγαπᾷ ὁ θεός* (2 Cor 9:7); *ἐκ πίστεως δικαιοῖ τὰ ἔθνη ὁ θεός* (Gal 3:8); *ἐξαπέστειλεν ὁ θεός τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ* (Gal 4:4; cf. Rom 8:3), etc. For more details, see below.

¹¹E.g., *εὐχαριστῶ τῷ θεῷ* (Rom 1:8; 1 Cor 1:4, 14; 14:18; 2 Cor 9:11, 12); *καυχᾶσαι ἐν θεῷ* (Rom 2:17); *οὐκ ἔστιν ὁ ἐκζητῶν τὸν θεόν* (Rom 3:11); *εἰρήνην ἔχομεν πρὸς τὸν θεόν* (Rom 5:1); *δοξάσατε δὴ τὸν θεόν* (1 Cor 6:20); *ἐπεστρέψατε πρὸς τὸν θεόν* (1 Thess 1:9), etc.

¹²E.g., the ‘oneness’ of God (being a Jew, Paul is a strict monotheist and can speak of God as the One and Only God, Rom 3:30; 1 Cor 8:4, 6; Gal 3:20; etc.); His attributes as the wisdom of God (Rom 11:33; 1 Cor 1:21, 24, 30; 2:7); the righteousness of God (Rom 1:17; 3:5, 21, 22, 25; 10:3; 2 Cor 5:21; Phil 3:9); the love of God (Rom 5:5, 8; 8:39; 2 Cor 13:13; 2 Thess 3:5); the grace of God (Rom 3:24; 5:15; 1 Cor 1:4; 3:10; 15:10; 2 Cor 1:12; 6:1; 8:1; 9:14; Gal 2:21; Eph 3:2, 7); the mercies of God (Rom 12:1; 2 Cor 1:3); the faithfulness of God (Rom 3:3; 1 Cor 1:9; 1 Thess 5:24); the truth of God (Rom 1:25; 3:7; 15:8; 1 Thess 1:9); the power of God (Rom 1:16; 1 Cor 1:18, 24; 2:5); the name of God (Rom 1:5; 2:24; 9:17; 10:13; 1 Cor 1:2, 10; 5:4; 6:11; Phil 2:10); the glory of God (Rom 3:23; 5:2; 15:7; 1 Cor 10:31; 2 Cor 4:6, 15; Phil 2:11); the will of God (Rom 12:2; 1 Cor 1:1; 2 Cor 1:1; Eph 1:1; Col 1:1); the wrath of God (Rom 1:18; 5:9; 12:19; 13:4; Eph 5:6; Col 3:1; 1 Thess 2:16); the judgment of God (Rom 2:2, 3, 5; 2 Thess 1:5); His divine qualities—God is living (Rom 9:26; 2 Cor 6:16; 1 Thess 1:9; 1 Tim 3:15; 4:10; 6:17); God is faithful (1 Cor 1:9; 10:13; 2 Cor 1:18); God is eternal (Rom 16:26); He is wise (Rom 16:27; cf. 11:33); He is also the God of endurance and encouragement (Rom 15:5); the God of hope (Rom 15:13); the God of all comfort (2 Cor 1:3); the God of love and peace (2 Cor 13:11); the God of peace (Rom 15:33; 1 Cor 14:33; Phil 4:9; 1 Thess 5:23), etc.

¹³E.g., *εὐαγγέλιον θεοῦ* (Rom 1:1; 15:16; 2 Cor 11:7; 1 Thess 2:2, 8, 9; 1 Tim 1:11); *υἱὸς θεοῦ* (Rom 1:4; 8:14; 9:26; 2 Cor 1:19; Gal 2:20; Eph 4:13); *θέλημα θεοῦ* (Rom 1:10; 12:2; 15:32; 1 Cor 1:1; 2 Cor 1:1; 8:5; Gal 1:4; Eph 1:1, etc.); *δύναμις θεοῦ* (Rom 1:16; 1 Cor 1:18, 24; 2:5; 2 Cor 6:7); *δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ* (Rom 1:17; 3:5; 3:21, 22; 10:3; 2 Cor 5:21; Phil 3:19); *ὁργὴ θεοῦ* (Rom 1:18; Eph 5:6; Col 3:6); *ἀλήθεια θεοῦ* (Rom 1:25; 3:7; 1 Thess 1:9; 2 Thess 3:5); *λογός θεοῦ* (Rom 9:6; 1 Cor 14:36; 2 Cor 2:17; 4:2; Eph 6:17; Col 1:25, etc.); *ἀγάπη θεοῦ* (Rom 5:5; 8:39; 2 Cor 13:13); *νόμος θεοῦ* (Rom 7:22; 8:7); *πνεῦμα θεοῦ* (Rom 8:9, 14; 15:19; 1 Cor 2:11, 14; 3:16; 2 Cor 3:3; Eph 4:30; Phil 3:3). For more examples

Christ—His person and work.¹⁴

Paul, in addition, speaks about God in relation to creation and to humans.¹⁵ He often expresses these God-language statements in participial forms or in relative clauses,¹⁶ and in ‘divine passives’ (i.e., implying that God is the subject of the action).¹⁷ Paul’s use of these verbal descriptions for God in his letters is bound up with the real situations of his specific church context or, more specifically, his missionary context.

These descriptions underline the God-centered nature of Paul’s theology and additionally

and references, see previous footnote.

¹⁴E.g., Paul refers to God as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (Rom 15:6; Col 1:3), therefore, He is the Son of God (Rom 1:4; 2 Cor 1:9; Gal 2:20; Eph 4:13). Paul also refers to Christ as God (Rom 9:5; 1 Cor 11:3). It is God who brought salvation through Christ; e.g., he promised the gospel in the OT (Rom 1:2); the gospel is the gospel of God (Rom 1:1; 15:16; 2 Cor 11:7; 1 Thess 2:2, 8, 9; 1 Tim 1:11); the gospel concerns God’s Son, Jesus Christ (1:3-4); God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, in the flesh (Rom 8:3; Gal 4:4); Christ’s works of atonement and resurrection are ascribed to God (Rom 3:25; 4:24-25; 8:11; 10:9; 1 Cor 6:14; Gal 1:1; Eph 1:20; Col 2:12); God manifested His righteousness in Christ’s work (Rom 3:21-26), etc.

¹⁵E.g., Paul refers to God as the Creator of all things (Rom 1:25; 11:36; 1 Cor 8:6; 11:12; Eph 3:9; cf. Acts 17:24; 14:15). He also describes God as Father (Rom 6:4; 1 Cor 15:24; Gal 1:1; Eph 1:17; 2:18; 3:14; 4:6; 5:20; 6:23; Phil 2:11; Col 1:3; 1:12; 3:17; 1 Thess 1:1; 1 Tim 1:2). However, men dishonored God (Rom 2:23); they blaspheme the name of God (Rom 2:24); they are men who do not seek after God (Rom 3:11); they have no fear of God (Rom 3:18); they are at enmity with God (Rom 8:7; 11:28); men exchanged the glory of God for the created beings (Rom 1:23); they exchanged the truth of God for a lie (Rom 1:25); and they worshiped and served creatures rather than the Creator. Men are without God (Eph 2:12), alienated from Him (Eph 4:18), do not please God (1 Thess 2:15), do not know God (Eph 4:5; 2 Thess 1:8), or despised Him (1 Thess 4:8; cf. 2 Cor 10:5). Hence, man must give an account of himself to God (Rom 14:12). However, God shows His love for sinful men (Rom 5:5, 8; 2 Thess 2:16); God justifies the ungodly (Rom 4:5); He justifies all people, both Jews and gentiles (Rom 3:29-30; Gal 3:8); and God gives life to the dead (Rom 4:17). Through Jesus Christ, men are now reconciled to God (Rom 5:10; 2 Cor 5:20). They become the sons of God (Rom 8:14, 19; 9:26; Gal 3:26), or His children (Rom 8:16; 9:8, 26; Phil 2:15), and heirs of God (Rom 8:17), and so on.

¹⁶E.g., τὸν δικαιούντα τὸν ἀσεβῆ (Rom 4:5), τὸν ἐγείραντα Ἰησοῦν τὸν κύριον ἡμῶν ἐκ νεκρῶν, (Rom 4:24), ὁ δὲ ἐραυνῶν τὰς καρδίας (Rom 8:27), ὅς γε τοῦ ἰδίου υἱοῦ οὐκ ἐφείσατο ἀλλὰ ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν πάντων παρέδωκεν αὐτόν (Rom 8:32).

¹⁷E.g., ἐλογίσθη τῷ Ἀβραάμ ἡ πίστις εἰς δικαιοσύνην (Rom 4:9); ὥσπερ ἠγέρθη Χριστὸς ἐκ νεκρῶν διὰ τῆς δόξης τοῦ πατρὸς (Rom 6:4); Χριστὸς ἐγερθεὶς ἐκ νεκρῶν (Rom 6:9); ἐγήγερται τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ τρίτῃ (1 Cor 15:4, 12-22), etc.

point to the larger field of Paul's theo-logical statements, as Seifrid comments.¹⁸ Besides, Paul has been a missionary to the gentiles. Thus, these descriptions not only reveal God's ultimate concerns and purposes for the world, but reflect that Paul's mission theology is centered and rooted in God, as well.

Furthermore, a review of Paul's epistles shows that he employs numerous implicit or indirect references to God, which many studies of Paul's theology tend to ignore. These indirect statements about God are not only significant to form the background of Paul's explicit language regarding God, but also reveal something of the outline of his theology.¹⁹ For example, Paul recognizes that the Scripture is inspired/breathed out by God (πᾶσα γραφὴ θεόπνευστος, 2 Tim 3:16; cf. 2 Pet 1:20-21) or given by God, and naturally he determines frequently to emphasize the written medium,²⁰ or the human medium speaking for God.²¹ It is evident from numerous references mentioned above that Paul implements a number of direct or indirect statements, expressions, themes, actions, and grammatical forms for communicating the language about God. It would be an enormous task for anyone wanting to construct a complete theo-logy of Paul because that would require bringing together all the various statements pertaining to God. As Moxnes notes, "A full understanding of Paul's theology in a letter

¹⁸Mark A. Seifrid, "The Knowledge of the Creator and Experience of Exile: The Contours of Paul's Theo-logy" (paper presented at the SNTS Seminar on "Inhalte und Probleme einer neutestamentlichen Theologie," Martin Luther Universität, Halle, Wittenberg, 2-7 August 2005), 4.

¹⁹Ibid., 5.

²⁰E.g., ἡ γραφὴ (occurs 10 times) or the impersonal γέγραπται (occurs 31 times, and more than half of those appear in Romans alone).

²¹E.g., prophets (Rom 1:2); David (Rom 4:6-8); Moses (Rom 10:5, 19; 1 Cor 9:9); Isaiah (Rom 10:16, 20-21; 15:12; cf. also Law and Prophets, Rom 3:21).

must consider all statements he made about God, both direct and indirect. In Romans, however, this would result in a verse-by-verse commentary on the text.”²² Moreover, it is beyond the scope to present a complete theo-logy of Paul or even an entire theo-logy of his mission. Consequently, the following is intended to identify God specifically referring to all those verbal descriptive statements regarding God as the foundation of Paul’s mission to the nations in the letter to the Romans.

The Identity of God in Romans

The theme of God permeates the letter to the Romans from the beginning to the end. Paul employs the word “God” (θεός) 153 times in Romans,²³ which is more than it appears in any other New Testament book, except for Acts of the Apostles.²⁴ Commenting on the letter to the Romans, Morris states, “No book in Scripture is as God-centered as is this.”²⁵ The purpose of this study is not a quest for an outline of Paul’s understanding of God by analyzing the different words and titles that he utilizes for God, though. It is not a search for abstract ideas about God, nor an exploration about titular names for God in Romans, as seen in numerous examples mentioned above. They are important, however, for a fuller understanding of Paul’s theo-logy in general. Instead, it investigates his frequent use of descriptive statements about God’s act for the salvation of

²²Moxnes, *Theology in Conflict*, 17.

²³Of the 153 occurrences, nominative θεός appears 32 times, genitive θεοῦ 77, dative θεῷ 29, and accusative θεόν 15 times.

²⁴See Morris, “The Theme of Romans,” 250-51; idem, “The Apostle Paul and His God,” 165. Acts has it 166 times. Luke includes it 122 times and 1 Corinthians 105 times, but no other book exceeds the hundred.

²⁵Morris, “The Theme of Romans,” 252.

the world, which he links with his concern for the nations at various points in the letter.

It is noted above that Paul often implements participles, relative clauses, or divine passives to express these descriptive statements with regard to God. These statements about God's action directly speak of His action both in past time (always bound up with God's work in Christ), as well as in the present time.²⁶ By articulating these descriptive statements concerning God, Paul makes it plain in Romans that God's true identity is bound by His actions on behalf of His people. "For Paul," remarks Francis Watson, "the question who God is can best be answered by reference to what God does – just as, in a narrative, a character may be individualized by reference to significant actions within a specific history, rather than through immanent attributes or dispositions."²⁷ Similarly, Hays points out that "Paul is not a philosopher seeking to articulate general truths about God's character; rather, he is a missionary timelessly telling the story of the one God's astounding specific acts of self-giving grace."²⁸

Unlike in other religions, these statements clearly demonstrate that the God of the Bible is not only the divine being, who encompasses divine attributes and natures, but He is additionally the One who acts. This forms the distinct Christian identity of God, revealed fully and only in Jesus Christ. God's action is the vehicle of His identity. In Pauline letters, specifically in Romans, God's action plays a significant role in the manifestation of God's identity. For instance, God is 'the one who raised Jesus from the

²⁶Seifrid, "The Knowledge of the Creator," 5.

²⁷Francis Watson, "The Triune Divine Identity: Reflections on Pauline God-Language, in Disagreement with J. D. G. Dunn," *JSNT* 80 (2000): 105.

²⁸Hays, "The God of Mercy Who Rescues Us from the Present Evil Age," 124.

dead' (Rom 4:24; 8:11; 10:9); thus, the action of raising Jesus reveals not only what God does but, at the same time, who God is.²⁹ In fact, God can be known exclusively through what God has done through Jesus Christ is the basis for our missionary proclamations. This study, therefore, will particularly focus on Paul's statements regarding God that reveal His special identity as the One who acts in salvation history to gather all nations into the community of God's people through faith in His Son Jesus Christ.

God as the One Who Promised the Gospel Beforehand (Rom 1:1-2)

Paul affirms at the beginning of his letter that he was "set apart for the gospel of God, which *he promised beforehand* through [διὰ, not 'by'] his prophets in the Holy Scriptures" (1:1-2). He makes this affirmation in the context of his call to preach the gospel to all nations. Right from the beginning of his letter, Paul characterizes the identity of God in terms of God's action, not in terms of some abstract ideas. Hence, we encounter a God, who promised the gospel beforehand in the Holy Scriptures. Paul, in this statement, makes a clear dual fact about the gospel: first, the gospel truly originates from God (the gospel of God); second, God promised this gospel beforehand. "This places the emphasis," as Köstenberger attests, "squarely on God's initiative, foreknowledge, provision, and sovereignty."³⁰ The gospel that Paul was called to preach was authenticated by God himself, which was identified earlier as "the gospel of God." It

²⁹Watson, "The Triune Divine Identity," 106. In like manner, Robert W. Jenson affirms, "The content of the gospel is that God can now be known as "whoever raised Jesus from the dead" (*The Triune Identity: God according to the Gospel* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982], 8). See below for more such examples, which are the main focus of this chapter.

³⁰Andreas J. Köstenberger, "The Gospel for All Nations," in *Faith Comes by Hearing: A Response to Inclusivism*, ed. Christopher W. Morgan and Robert A. Peterson, 201-19 (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic; Leicester: Apollos, 2008), 201, 209.

is reinforced here (note the relative clause $\delta\acute{\iota}$) by employing the three great biblical themes—namely, (1) promise: “He [i.e. God] promised beforehand” ($\pi\rho\omicron\epsilon\pi\eta\gamma\gamma\epsilon\acute{\iota}\lambda\alpha\tau\omicron$); (2) prophets: “His [i.e. God’s] prophets” ($\tau\acute{\omega}\nu\ \pi\rho\omicron\phi\eta\tau\acute{\omega}\nu\ \alpha\upsilon\tau\omicron\upsilon$); and (3) Scriptures: “holy Scriptures” ($\gamma\rho\alpha\phi\alpha\acute{\iota}\varsigma\ \acute{\alpha}\gamma\acute{\iota}\alpha\iota\varsigma$). Paul, hence, emphasizes the trustworthiness of His message of the gospel.

The gospel is part of God’s unchanging plan of action that was made long before, as it is evident from Paul’s use of the word $\pi\rho\omicron\epsilon\pi\alpha\gamma\gamma\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\lambda\omicron\mu\alpha\iota$.³¹ It is an aorist middle verb, which has a reflexive meaning of an action by God “on his own behalf.”³² Paul’s careful selection of this unparalleled verb indicates that God not only made the promise of the gospel long ago, but He also fulfilled the promise of the gospel in its proclamation to the nations. Thus, God is both the promise-making God along with the promise-keeping God. This, in fact, reveals “the promise-fulfillment pattern,” which will dominate usage of the Old Testament throughout the epistle.³³ Paul makes this promise of

³¹This compound verb is not common in the NT; it is found elsewhere only in 2 Cor 9:5. However, its common use in the NT is without the prefix $\pi\rho\omicron$, $\epsilon\pi\alpha\gamma\gamma\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\epsilon\sigma\theta\alpha\iota/\epsilon\pi\alpha\gamma\gamma\epsilon\lambda\acute{\iota}\alpha$, meaning “promise.” It is a theme that occurs frequently in the writings of Paul, especially in Romans and Galatians. He uses it 31 of the 60 times that it appears in the NT (according to the Greek text Novum Testamentum Graece, Nestle-Aland, 27th edition), most often to describe the blessings of salvation (e.g., Rom 4:16; Gal 3:22; 2 Cor 7:1; etc.). For details, see C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans: Introduction and Commentary Romans I-VIII*, ICC, 10th printing (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1975), 1:55, n. 3; W. Sanday and A. C. Headlam, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, ICC, 5th ed., 1902; reprint (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1955), 6. Sanday and Headlam divide the word into three different groups: (1) the promises made by Christ, in particular the promise of the Holy Spirit (e.g., Acts 1:4; Gal 3:14; Eph 1:13); (2) the promise of the OT, fulfilled in Christ and in Christianity (e.g., Acts 13:32; 26:6; 8 times each in Romans and Galatians; and frequently in Hebrews), and (3) in a wider sense of promises, whether as yet fulfilled or unfulfilled (e.g., 2 Cor 1:20; 7:1; 1 Tim 4:8; 2 Tim 1:1; 2 Pet 3:4, etc.).

³²Robert Jewett, *Romans: A Commentary*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 103. Richardson (*Paul’s Language about God*, 59-60) points out Paul’s use of verbs with the prefix $\pi\rho\omicron$, predicating divine action. For a similar examples, see $\pi\rho\omicron\acute{\epsilon}\gamma\gamma\omega$ (Rom 8:29; cf. 11:2); $\pi\rho\omicron\kappa\epsilon\chi\rho\omega\mu\acute{\epsilon}\nu\eta\gamma$ (Gal 3:17); $\pi\rho\omicron\epsilon\upsilon\eta\gamma\gamma\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\iota\sigma\alpha\tau\omicron$ (Gal 3:8); $\pi\rho\omicron\acute{\omega}\rho\iota\sigma\epsilon\nu$ (Rom 8:29-30; cf. 1 Cor 2:7; Eph 1:5, 11).

³³G. R. Osborne, *Romans*, IVPNTC (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 29; John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans: The English Text with Introduction, Exposition, and Notes*, NICNT, 1968, reprint (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 4. For a detailed discussion on “promise and fulfillment in Paul,” see Nils A. Dahl, *Studies in Paul: Theology for the Early Christian Mission* (Minneapolis: Augsburg

the gospel and its fulfillment more evident in the following verses (3-17) and elaborates further in the body of the letter, referring to many OT citations (especially chapters 4, 9-11, and 15).

The references to the promises God made concerning the gospel are found in its content and scope (1:3-5, 16-17). Paul believes that the promise of deliverance made to Israel in the OT (particularly in Isaiah 40:9; 52:7; 60:6; 61:1), are now fulfilled in the gospel. God himself promised in the gospel, prior to the earthly appearance of Jesus, that He would be the Messiah; that He will “descend from David according to the flesh” (1:3; 15:12)—the promise God gave to David through Nathan in 2 Samuel 7:12-16 (cf. Ps 2; Isa 11:10);³⁴ that He will establish his throne forever; and that He would deliver the nation.³⁵ Paul affirms Jesus’ coming in the flesh. The early church believed that these promises have been fulfilled in the mission of Jesus, and God brought about this fulfillment of His promise in the incarnation (8:3), passion, and resurrection (4:24-25; 8:32) of Jesus Christ.³⁶

Publishing House, 1977), 121-36. In fact, Romans has far more OT quotations than any other Pauline letters. There are 89 OT citations in the corpus of uncontested Pauline letters, 51 of which are in Romans alone. See Hays, “The God of Mercy Who Rescues Us from the Present Evil Age,” 133; D. Moody Smith, “The Pauline Literature,” in *It Is Written: Scripture Citing Scripture. Essays in Honour of Barnabas Lindars*, ed. D. A. Carson and H. G. M. Williamson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 274.

³⁴Most interpreters of Romans understand Rom 1:3-4 as referring to 2 Sam 7:12-14. See Dahl, *Studies in Paul*, 127; Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 1:58; Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 85; Peter Stuhlmacher, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans: A Commentary* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1994), 19; Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1998), 40; Osborne, *Romans*, 30, and others. This expectation of the Davidic Messiah was recognized in Judaism in numerous references, e.g., Ps Sol 17:23; 1QM 11:1-8; 4QFlor 1:11-14; 4QpGen^a 5:1-7.

³⁵E.g., Ps 89:3-4, 9-20; Isa 11:1-10; Jer 23:5-6; 31:31-34; 33:14-18; Ezek 34:23-24; 37:24-25.

³⁶E.g., Matt 1:1, 16-17; 20:30-31; Mark 10:47-48; 12:35-37; Luke 1:27, 32, 55, 69; 2:4; 3:23-31; 12:35-37; 24:24-28; John 7:42; Acts 2:30-35; 4:24-26; 10:36-43; 13:22-23; 32-34; Rom 15:12; 2 Tim 2:8; Rev 5:5; 22:16.

Additionally, this promise of God has its direct connection with the gentiles and their salvation. Paul not only describes the gospel as a message that God “promised beforehand through his prophets in holy scriptures.” It is a message as well, however, that he has been commissioned to bring to *the nations* (v. 5), as something attested by the law and the prophets.³⁷ God promised Abraham and his descendants that they would “inherit the world” (4:13) and that Abraham would be “the father of many nations” (4:17, Gen 17:5). God’s promise was made not only to Abraham’s descendants, but also extended to the nations. The promise of God is absolutely trustworthy, and Abraham wholeheartedly believed in God’s promise in the face of human impossibility, and that faith was counted to him as righteousness. This trustworthiness of the promise of God’s action and its fulfillment constitute the foundation of Paul’s mission to the nations.

It is evident that, although God revealed this gospel to the apostles—including Paul himself—it did not come to them as a complete new revelation. It was, in fact, promised beforehand *through his prophets* (διὰ τῶν προφητῶν αὐτοῦ).³⁸ These prophets belong to God [note His prophets]—the writers and the communicators of His words, the vehicles/mouthpieces of His message. Paul claims that the prophets recorded the gospel of God in the period before Christ. Paul was eager to state to his majority-gentile readers, as well as to the Jewish readers, that this gospel has historical continuity with God’s

³⁷Donaldson, “God,” 100.

³⁸It seems clear from the context that “prophets” do not only refer to those of the latter part of the OT—whom we normally classify as prophets—but to the inspired men of the OT through whom God spoke, such as Moses (cf. Acts 3:22), David (cf. Acts 2:29-31), and others. The expression “his [i.e., God’s] prophets” appears otherwise only in the Song of Zechariah (Luke 1:70; or ‘his holy prophets’ in Acts 3:21; cf. also “your prophets” in Rom 11:3). See Franz Schnider, “προφήτης,” *EDNT*, 3:184; Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 1:56, n. 4; Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 4.

revelations to Israel in the OT promises given through the prophets.³⁹ This prophetic message provides an indispensable continuity between the old and the new covenants. Therefore, the gospel that Paul was called to preach is a fulfillment of what was promised in the Scriptures.

Paul locates God's promise in the Scriptures, literally "in holy Scriptures" (ἐν γραφαῖς ἁγλαῖς),⁴⁰ evidently referring to the OT Scriptures.⁴¹ The significance of the absence of the article with the phrase "holy Scriptures" stresses the quality of Scripture as "holy." The term 'holy' emphasizes its source as being of distinctively divine origin (e.g., see 3:2; 9:17; 15:4, etc.). Consequently, the Scriptures are distinguished from all other writings by their character as holy and divine. In addition, the stress falls upon the fact that the promises of God exist as such only in the Scriptures. God's promise is made known in holy Scriptures. God made the promise of the gospel through His prophets, but

³⁹See Rom 3:21, 31; 4:6; cf. Luke 24:25-27; 44-47; 1 Pet 1:10-12.

⁴⁰The term "scripture" (Gk γραφή, found 14 times in the Pauline letters) most commonly occurs in the singular with the article, "the scripture" (e.g., Rom 4:3; 9:17; 10:11; 11:2; Gal 3:8, 22; 4:30; 1 Tim 5:18; note once "all scripture" or "every scripture" (2 Tim 3:16); and occasionally in the plural with the article (e.g., Rom 15:4; 1 Cor 15:3, 4). However, the article used here in most of the translations (e.g., "in the holy scriptures," as in RSV, NASV, NIV, NRSV, ESV, etc.) is absent in the original Greek text. It is recognized that prepositional phrases normally omit the article, but this does not necessarily make the expression indefinite (e.g., Matt 10:22; John 1:1, 13; Rom 1:4; 2 Cor 10:3; Heb 4:3; 9:12; 1 Pet 1:12, etc.). See Archibald T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research*, 4th ed. (Nashville: Broadman, 1923), 791; idem, *Word Pictures in the New Testament: The Epistles of Paul* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1931), 4:323; BDF, 255; Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 1:56; M. Zerwick, *Biblical Greek Illustrated by Examples* (Rome: Pontificio Instituto Biblico, 2001), 58-59. However, all prepositional phrases do not make the absence of the article definite (e.g., Luke 1:39; Acts 4:27; John 4:27; 1 Cor 3:13; Heb 1:2, etc.). For details, see Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 247.

⁴¹The most common NT designation of the OT is simple ἡ γραφή or αἱ γραφαί. It is unusual in the NT for Scripture to be characterized as "holy" (ἅγιος, only here, though Law is characterized as holy [Rom 7:21] and once with an adjective ἱερός [2 Tim 3:15]).

this promise is revealed in the Scriptures.⁴²

It is plain that Paul treats Scriptures as a trustworthy witness of God's Word of promise. Hence, from the very opening of the letter, Paul highlights the role of the Scriptures in the gospel that he was called to preach when he said "he promised beforehand through his prophets in holy Scriptures." Moreover, the letter closes with a similar statement, "But has now been manifested through the prophetic writings" (γραφῶν προφητικῶν, 16:26), which fact is quite significant.⁴³ Paul believes that the salvific promises made to Israel in the OT are being fulfilled in his proclamation of the gospel to the nations. Therefore, when Paul presented his mission to the gentiles, he explained his role theo-logically that it is God who promised and planned it from eternity.

Hence, God is not only the author of the gospel, which He set forth to proclaim through Paul and others to the nations. Furthermore, He intended it from all eternity, and promised it through His prophets in the OT scriptures. It is brought into being by the gospel events (incarnation, mission, passion, crucifixion, resurrection, and glorification). In consequence, Paul could declare, "But now the righteousness of God has been manifested (πεφάνερωται, note Paul's use of the perfect tense) apart from the law, to which the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it" (Rom 3:21). Thus, it is God's act of promise that lays the foundation for Paul's mission to the nations.

⁴²Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 4. According to Murray, Paul's estimate of the Scripture is twofold. First of all, for Paul, it is the Scriptures are a body of writings with unique quality and authority, distinguished from all other writings by their sacredness. Second, he did not distinguish between the promise of God, of which the prophets were the intermediaries, on the one hand, and the holy Scriptures, on the other.

⁴³James C. Miller, *The Obedience of Faith, the Eschatological People of God, and the Purpose of Romans*, SBLDS 177 (Atlanta, GA: SBL, 2000), 87-88.

God as the One Who Reveals Himself in His Creation (1:18-20)

Paul continues with the identity of God in reference to what God does. He writes,

For the wrath of God is being revealed (*ἀποκαλύπτεται*, note the passive voice) from heaven against all godlessness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is manifest to them, because *God has revealed it to them*. For his invisible nature, namely, his eternal power and divine attributes have been clearly perceived (*καθορᾶται*) ever since the creation of the world, being understood (*νοούμενα*) in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse (1:18-20).

Paul makes this bold statement in the context of the universal reign of sin (1:18-3:20), which is the main theme of the passage,⁴⁴ and argues on the basis of his missionary experience.⁴⁵ He earlier emphasizes that the gospel, which God promised in the Scripture long ago, is the power of God for salvation both to ‘the Jews and the gentiles’ (all people). The righteousness of God, the divine means to salvation for all humanity, is revealed in this gospel. For this reason, Paul claims the relevance of the gospel to a universal need for salvation. The question is, though, ‘Why do all people need this salvation, which is available through the righteousness of God revealed only in the gospel?’ The gentiles might contend that they do not have the Law/Scripture as the Jews do. They have never heard of this God who promised the gospel and, through it, salvation for all. Paul, however, logically and rationally brings charges not only against gentiles to

⁴⁴Contra K. R. Snodgrass, “Justification by Grace—to the Doers: The Place of Romans 2 in the Theology of Paul,” *NTS* 32 (1986): 72-93. He thinks that this traditional interpretation by the interpreters of Romans is a “distortion of 1:18-3:8” because the word *ἀμαρτία* and its cognates do not appear until 3:9. As a result, he suggests the theme of 1:18-3:20 as “the vindication of God” (76). For a critique of Snodgrass, see Bell, *No One Seeks for God*, 10-11.

⁴⁵Otto Michel, *Der Brief an die Römer*, KEK 4, 1955, reprint (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1978), 96; Stuhlmacher, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans*, 34; Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 94. See also Bell, *No One Seeks for God*, 21-23.

begin with, but subsequently against the Jews and all people in Romans 1:18-3:20.

Paul strongly answers that “they are under the wrath of God revealed from heaven.” ‘Why are they under the wrath of God?’ Once again, he reasonably replies that “in their unrighteousness, they have suppressed the truth about God.” But ‘how did they know the truth about this God?’ In verse 19, Paul persuasively responds, “For what can be known about God (τὸ γνωστὸν τοῦ θεοῦ) is manifest (φανερὸν) to them, because *God has revealed* (ἐφάνερωσεν) *it to them*” [emphasis added]. In other words, he quite clearly tells his readers about the identity of this God in action word—that is, God is the One who has revealed himself to the world. This is the gospel truth about God’s self-revelation in the creation, so that all may know Him, worship Him, revere Him, and serve Him as the only true God. People of this world in the past and also in Paul’s day, however, suppressed (κατεχόντων) this very truth about God by their godlessness and unrighteousness. Therefore, in the following verses, Paul not only offers reasons for a universal need for salvation, but he explains as well how God’s true manifestation in the creation has been suppressed by exposing the detailed, graphic descriptions of unrighteous and sinful acts of all humankind (1:19-32-3:20) among whom he proclaims the gospel.

Many scholars assume that Paul’s indictment in verses 19-32 is against Israel (see v. 23; cf. Ps 106:20; Jer 2:11),⁴⁶ while others admit that it is against the gentiles as

⁴⁶See Jouette M. Bassler, *Divine Impartiality: Paul and a Theological Axiom*, SBLDS 59 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1982), 122; Glen N. Davis, *Faith and Obedience in Romans: A Study of Romans 1-4*, JSNTSup 39 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990), 47-52. In light of Jewish polemic (see Wis 13-15), this seems improbable. See Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 97.

viewed from a Jewish perspective.⁴⁷ Still others think that he is speaking against both Jews and gentiles.⁴⁸ Though sins referenced in this section (1:18-32) may specifically be associated with gentiles (vv. 23-27), Paul is speaking of ἄνθρωπος in general (v. 18). There are allusions to the Fall of Adam⁴⁹ and to the sins of the Israelites (cf. v. 23 with Deut 4:16-20; Ps 106:20; Jer 2:11), as well as to the wickedness of the gentiles in this passage (e.g., references to idolatry and homosexual practices, 1:23-27). Consequently, Richard Bell holds that Paul is most likely speaking to both Jews and gentiles in Romans 1:18-32.⁵⁰ It makes it improbable, however, that Jews may be entirely excluded here.⁵¹

Some scholars observe allusions to the early Jewish and apocryphal writings.⁵² Like Hellenistic Jewish writers, such as Philo and the author of the Wisdom of Solomon (Wis 13-15 is particularly significant), Paul traces gentile immorality to idolatry.⁵³ Like

⁴⁷E.g., C. H. Dodd, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans*, MNTC (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1944), 19; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, The Anchor Bible, vol. 33 (New York: Doubleday, 1993; reprint, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 269-72; Anders Nygren, *Commentary on Romans*, trans. Carl C. Rasmussen (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1949), 98; Mark A. Seifrid, *Christ, Our Righteousness: Paul's Theology of Justification*, NSBT 9 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 50. See also Schreiner (*Romans*, 81-82), especially his five-point arguments in favor of gentiles.

⁴⁸W. L. Knox, *St. Paul and the Church of the Gentiles* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1939), 183; Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 1: 105-06; Richard H. Bell, *No One Seeks for God: An Exegetical and Theological Study of Romans 1:18-3:20*, WUNT 106 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998), 25, n. 25.

⁴⁹See M. D. Hooker, "Adam in Romans I," *NTS* 6 (1959-60): 297-306. For a response to Hooker's view, see A. J. M. Wedderburn, "Adam in Paul's Letter to the Romans," in *Studia Biblica 1978 III*, ed. E. A. Livingstone, 413-30 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1980), 413-30. Contra Bassler, *Divine Impartiality*, 196-97; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 283-84.

⁵⁰See Bell, *No One Seeks for God*, 24-27.

⁵¹Cf. Schreiner, *Romans*, 81-82.

⁵²For a brief survey of scholarly opinion, see Richard Allan Young, "The Knowledge of God in Romans 1:18-23: Exegetical and Theological Reflections," *JETS* 43 (2000): 700-01.

⁵³For a table displaying possible parallels between Romans and Wisdom literature, see Sanday

his predecessors, Paul was convinced that the human mind can infer the existence of the Creator from the created and the Maker from the made (later called the cosmological argument for God's existence). While Paul never quotes the Wisdom of Solomon, his understanding is both similar to, and dissimilar from, its views. Perhaps he was drawing more on the OT prophets' criticism of idolatry (for instance, see Deut 4:16-20; Ps 106:20; Jer 2:11).⁵⁴

Paul begins with the revelation of "the wrath of God"⁵⁵ as rationale for the need for God's saving righteousness as revealed in the gospel. God's wrath is divine, a personal and dynamic reaction against sin and evil (3:5; 5:9; 9:22; 12:19).⁵⁶ The genitive *θεοῦ* refers to a genitive of origin, portraying the wrath of God as the revelation of God's

and Headlam, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 51-52. For a detailed assessment of the relation of Romans 1:18-32 to Greek philosophy, Hellenistic Judaism, and Apocalyptic and Wisdom literatures, see Bell, *No One Seeks for God*, 61-89. Also see Young, "The Knowledge of God in Romans 1:18-23," 697-700.

⁵⁴Frederick L. Godet, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, trans. A. Cusin, 1879, reprint (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1977), 106; John Stott, *The Message of Romans*, BST (Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 70-71. See also Wiard Popkes, "Zum Aufbau und Charakter von Römer 1:18-32," *NTS* 28 (1982): 499. Popkes has pointed out that Paul's contention is similar to that of the OT prophets, especially Amos.

⁵⁵Unlike human anger, God's wrath is never malicious, nor an emotional outburst of His anger. As John Stott rightly describes, "Human anger, although there is such a thing as righteous indignation, is mostly unrighteous. It is an irrational and uncontrollable emotion, containing much vanity, animosity, malice, and the desire for revenge" (see Stott, *The Message of Romans*, 71). Note that some interpreters correctly view God's wrath as not capricious or malicious. However, for them, it is an emotion or feeling. (For instance, see Godet, *Commentary on Romans*, 102; Leon Morris, *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross* [Leicester: IVP, 1965], 144-213; R. V. G. Tasker, *The Biblical Doctrine of the Wrath of God* [London: Tyndale Press, 1951], 9-11. For a critic of this view, see Bell, *No One Seeks for God*, 28). It is not merely to be the cause-and-effect process in a moral world, nor "wholly impersonal," as some interpreters see it. (For example, Dodd, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans*, 21-23; Anthony T. Hanson, *The Wrath of the Lamb* [London: SPCK, 1957], 69; George H. C. MacGregor, "The Concept of the Wrath of God in the New Testament," *NTS* 7 [1960-61]: 101-09.)

⁵⁶See BDAG, 720; Bell, *No One Seeks for God*, 28-33.

action in history.⁵⁷ Hence, it originates with God (3:5; 9:22; 12:19), and is related to His role as that of a righteous Judge. It has a cosmic dimension in that it is ἀπ’ οὐρανοῦ, referring “to a sovereign act of judgment from the very throne of God.”⁵⁸ The Greek particle “for” (γάρ), in verse 18, connects the thought of this idea with the preceding verses and provides a reason for it.⁵⁹ According to Godet, “There is a *revelation of righteousness* by the gospel, because there is a revelation of *wrath* on the whole world.”⁶⁰ As a result, Paul employs the same word ἀποκαλύπτεται (“is being revealed”),⁶¹ both here with “the wrath of God,” and in the previous verse (v. 17) with “the righteousness of God.” The present tense ties them together and, likewise, the passive implies that God does the act of revealing. For this reason, the wrath of God is an activity of God, just as the “the righteousness of God” (see below) describes an activity of God.

Moreover, in light of Paul’s apocalyptic eschatology, both the present righteousness—which is God’s saving righteousness revealed in the gospel—and the

⁵⁷Schreiner, *Romans*, 65.

⁵⁸See Osborne, *Romans*, 46.

⁵⁹Unfortunately, the NIV and REB omit it, implying that Paul begins an unrelated theme, and Moffatt wrongly translates it as “but,” indicating the contrastive or adversative idea. However, Dodd’s assertion, based on this mistranslation, seems more conspicuous. As he puts it, “The adversative conjunction “but” in 1:18 shows that the revelation of God’s anger is contrasted, and not identified, with the revelation of His righteousness.” (See Dodd, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans*, 36. See also James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, WBC, vol. 38A [Dallas: Word, 1988], 54; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 54.)

⁶⁰Godet, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 164.

⁶¹Though the verb is in present tense, here and elsewhere (1 Cor 3:13; Luke 17:30), it refers to a futuristic present. Although ἀποκαλύπτεται occurs in 1:17 for a present event, it is not qualified by ἀπ’ οὐρανοῦ, because it refers to the verb ἀποκαλύπτεται, and not to ὁργή θεοῦ (see Bell, *No One Seeks for God*, 14-16, especially n. 67). Even though this has a futuristic eschatological element by referring to the last judgment, the present tense should be read in its natural sense, as in 1:17. In fact, “(T)here is an inaugurated aspect: The wrath of God now is a harbinger of final judgment to come” (see Osborne, *Romans*, 46; also Nygren, *Commentary on Romans*, 100).

present wrath, which is God's judging righteousness revealed from heaven against the world, move forward to their completion into the future.⁶² Thus, it seems that there is a relation between God's continuing revelation of God's righteousness and God's continuing revelation of God's wrath.⁶³ It appears that there is a similar emphasis, as Alan F. Johnson asserts,

Just as the future salvation of believers is now in the present being revealed in the gospel of Jesus Christ and appropriated by faith, so both the past wrath of God against sin (as demonstrated in Calvary's events) as well as the future wrath of God (2:5) is now in the present revealed both in the preaching of the gospel and in the human scene and experienced by those who turn away from the truth of God (v. 29).⁶⁴

Although the two expressions may present parallel ideas between them, indicating a clear opposing activity of God—as many appeal to it,⁶⁵ Paul's subsequent argument demonstrates that he considers them to be interdependent.⁶⁶ Thomas Schreiner

⁶²Contra A. T. Hanson, *The Wrath of the Lamb*, 84-85. He limits the revelation of the wrath to God's present wrath.

⁶³Cf. Leander E. Keck, *Romans*, ANTC (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2005), 58. For discussion on this issue, see Schreiner, *Romans*, 84-85; Stott, *The Message of Romans*, 74-75.

⁶⁴Alan F. Johnson, *Romans*, EBC (Chicago: Moody Press, 2000), 41. Similarly, Martin Luther, *Lectures on Romans: Glosses and Scholia*, ed. Hilton C. Oswald, trans. Walter G. Tillmanns (chapters 1-2), and Jacob A. O. Preus (chapters 3-16), vol. 25 of *Luther's Works*, ed. Jeroslav Pelikan (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1972), 9; Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 1:109-10; Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 75; Andrew T. Lincoln, "From Wrath to Justification: Tradition, Gospel, and Audience in the Theology of Romans 1:18-4:25," in *Pauline Theology*, vol. 3, *Romans*, ed. D. M. Hay and E. E. Johnson (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 136-37; and others. There is no indication that Paul is making any reference to the events at the cross in 1:18ff., however, as Cranfield, Johnson, and others maintain.

⁶⁵E.g., some contend that "the wrath of God" in v. 18 is clearly a future event, and thus it should be distinguished from "the righteousness of God" in v. 17. See G. Bornkamm, *Early Christian Experience*, trans. Paul L. Hammer (London: SCM, 1969), 48; Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 100-02; Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 54. For further contrasting views, see Bell, *No One Seeks for God*, 13-16, especially n. 67.

⁶⁶Seifrid, *Christ, Our Righteousness*, 48. Similarly, Keck (*Romans*, 58) comments, "The parallel between verse 17 and verse 18 implies, then, that the revelation of God's rectitude and the revelation of God's wrath are distinguishable, but not separable; indeed, it is the former that discloses the latter."

suggests that the righteousness of God consists of both His saving and judging righteousness in the same gospel, although he recognizes the distinctiveness of the two concepts.⁶⁷ Like the righteousness of God, as others recognize, the wrath of God against human evil is God's revelation and therefore an aspect of the gospel as well.⁶⁸ Consequently, it seems obvious from this connection that the true preaching of the gospel of the righteousness of God must not be divorced from the preaching of the wrath of God upon all humankind, though His wrath is distinguished from the righteousness of God.

To whom is God revealing His wrath? Just as the gospel is God's saving power for all who believe, so God's wrath is directed "against all godlessness (*ἀσέβειαν*) and wickedness (*ἀδικίαν*) of human beings," not against the people themselves. The Greek word *ἀσέβεια* (godlessness) means irreverence and disrespect toward God, the Creator, or refusal to recognize, worship, and serve Him.⁶⁹ The word *ἀδικία*, which is most often translated as wickedness or unrighteousness, is the result of their "godlessness." Hence, *ἀσέβεια* is against the Creator and *ἀδικία* against men, which Lightfoot mentions.⁷⁰ This

⁶⁷See, Schreiner, *Romans*, 77-78.

⁶⁸Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 1:110-11. For a similar discussion, see Peter T. O'Brien, *Gospel and Mission in the Writings of Paul* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1995), 70-72; James R. Edwards, *Romans*, NIBC (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1992), 46-47; specially note his reference to Ernst Gaugler's (*Der Römerbrief*, 2 vols. [Zürich: Zwingli-Verlag, 1952-58], 1:46) statement that "the same living energy of the divine holiness which expresses itself in the gospel, on the one hand in God's opposition to sin, and on the other in his love which draws us homeward. Where one knows nothing of God's wrath, there one knows nothing of his love" (author's own translation); Johnson, *Romans*, 41. Contra Bell (*No One Seeks for God*, 14, n. 67), who points out to notice the contrast: "the *δικαιοσύνη* θεοῦ is revealed in the gospel (1:17); *ὁργή* θεοῦ is revealed from heaven."

⁶⁹Note v. 25, in which Paul uses the related verb *σεβάζομαι*—meaning to revere, respect, worship, and serve. In fact, he further elaborates *ἀσέβεια* (vv. 21-25) and *ἀδικία* (vv. 26-32) in the following verses.

⁷⁰Cited in Stott, *The Message of Romans*, 72.

dual characterization of human sin is grueling and burdensome because, by their ungodliness and wickedness, they “suppress the truth” (1:18b), so that they may live for themselves, rather than for God and for others. The truth, which is the truth of God as Creator, is the first and primary victim of their deliberate sinful behavior, so that this truth may not find expression in their lives.

In light of this background, Paul, in verses 19-20, proclaims the identity of the true God in action words against the god of images and idols, whom idolaters worship (1:21-25). Paul declares, “For what can be known about God is manifest to them because *God has revealed it to them*” (ὁ θεὸς γὰρ αὐτοῖς ἐφάνερωσεν 1:19). The truth is the knowledge of God, which is revealed to all human beings through creation or the natural order⁷¹ (natural revelation/general revelation). Even though all people may not hear about the God of the Bible or about the God revealed through the gospel/Jesus Christ (special revelation), yet God’s wrath will be directed toward those who suppress the knowledge of God that is imparted through natural revelation.⁷²

Therefore, when Paul speaks of “that which is known of God” (τὸ γνωστὸν τοῦ θεοῦ), it means that all people know certain truths about God, which is sufficient to know the Creator, who is sovereign and deserving of worship.⁷³ The reason they know God is

⁷¹The fact of revelation through creation is a regular scriptural theme. For example, see Job 37-41; 42:5; Ps 19:1; 104:24; Acts 14:15-17; 17:22-31.

⁷²For a discussion on the difference between general and special revelation, see Stott, *The Message of Romans*, 73.

⁷³Contra Bell, *No One Seeks for God*, 35-41, 90-93. According to Bell, all people’s knowledge of God does not include only certain attributes of God, but God’s being as a whole (36-38). Thus, he maintains, “And this knowledge is of God himself; it is not simply knowledge of his attributes” (90). Furthermore, Bell believes that this knowledge of God is not only “God the Father,” who is revealed, but also “God the Son.” “If Paul believed,” he contends, “that Christ was fully God and that he was instrumental in the creation of the world (1 Cor 8:6), it seems only natural to conclude that the “pre-

that “*God has revealed (ἐφανερώσεν)*”⁷⁴ *it to them*” (1:19; cf. John 21:1). God has constantly, in past history, “ever since the creation of the world” (1:20)—and in the present—revealed himself to all human beings through the natural order. Consequently, Paul’s language in these verses clearly indicates the natural revelation that imparts knowledge of God is sufficient for human beings to worship and honor Him appropriately.⁷⁵ However, this knowledge of God, though limited and not a saving knowledge,⁷⁶ is real and clearly perceived (νοούμενα καθορᾶται) by human beings, so that it is sufficient for distinguishing between the creation and the Creator.⁷⁷

Verse 20, which is introduced by an explanatory γὰρ (for), confirms and amplifies the statement that God has manifested himself to human beings.⁷⁸ Hence, God’s manifestation of himself through the natural order reveals not only mere knowledge of God as Creator, but a knowledge of “His invisible attributes” (τὰ ἀόρατα αὐτοῦ) as well,

existent” Christ is also revealed in creation” (91). This suggestion seems quite attractive. Bell, however, presses too far on the issue.

⁷⁴For a discussion concerning Paul’s use of φανερώ here in its place ἀποκαλύπτω (1:17, 18), see Fitzmyer (*Romans*, 273-80), who argues for the distinction. For a critique of Fitzmyer’s view, see Bell, *No One Seeks for God*, 38-39. He admits a subtle distinction between their usages. He is right, though, in not pressing too hard for the distinction.

⁷⁵Seifrid, *Christ, Our Righteousness*, 50.

⁷⁶For a theological examination of natural/general revelation, see B. Reicke, “Natürliche Theologie nach Paulus,” *SEA* 22-23 (1957-58): 154-67; David M. Coffey, “Natural Knowledge of God: Reflections on Romans 1:18-32,” *TS* 31 (1970): 674-90; Mark Seifrid, “Natural Revelation and the Purpose of the Law in Romans,” *TynBul* 49 (1998): 115-29; Schreiner, *Romans*, 85-87. For a discussion with reference to classical Christian (by early church fathers) interpretation, see Tomas C. Oden, “Without Excuse: Classic Christian Exegesis of General Revelation,” *JETS* 41 (1998): 55-68.

⁷⁷Paul certainly does not propose any advanced rational argument for proof of knowledge of God’s existence and His power, which is fundamental to natural theology. For details, see Schreiner, *Romans*, 85-87.

⁷⁸S. Lewis Johnson, “Paul and the Knowledge of God,” *BSac* 62 (1972): 68.

namely, his eternal power and divine nature (ἡ τε αἰδὶος αὐτοῦ δύναμις καὶ θεϊότης), that is sufficient to distinguish Him from that which has been made (1:20).⁷⁹ S. Lewis Johnson thinks that this phrase suggests “a full revelation of the being, the majesty, and the glory of God. He has left large footprints throughout His creation.”⁸⁰ Thus, the purpose of God’s revelation of himself to all human beings through creation is to acknowledge God as the Creator, and to honor, worship, and glorify Him as God (1:21-25). That is precisely what the human creature willfully rejects.

As a result, Paul attests that “although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him” (v. 21); they “exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things” (v. 23); and “they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator” (v. 25; cf. Deut 4:16-18). S. Lewis Johnson observes, “[T]he creature is worshiped instead of the Creator, the corruptible instead of the Incorruptible, the temporal instead of the Eternal, the earthly, fleshly animal instead of the heavenly, spiritual Being!”⁸¹ In essence, they have transferred worship to idols resembling human beings and all kinds of created things from the Creator.⁸² Therefore,, they are without

⁷⁹This does not mean that natural revelation offers any knowledge of human beings’ solution to guilt before God, or the forgiveness of sins that comes only through “special revelation,” which God declared in Scripture and made available in Jesus Christ. Thus, the knowledge of God through natural or general revelation can hardly be a saving knowledge. It does not impart any personal knowledge of God as a loving Father, who loves and saves His people and establishes relationships with them. See Stott, *The Message of Romans*, 73.

⁸⁰Johnson, “Paul and the Knowledge of God,” 69.

⁸¹*Ibid.*, 72-73.

⁸²These descriptions expose the most debasing practices of the pagan religions of Paul’s day and portray very similar practices of the Hindu religion in India and other parts of the world today. The pagan religions transfer their worship to idols and images, the cultural idolatry of the Western world is no

defense (1:20).

Their idolatry has induced God's wrath to come from heaven against all who are guilty of suppressing the truth about God and deliberately refusing to acknowledge Him as the Creator. For this reason, God gave them over (παρέδωκεν αὐτοὺς ὁ θεὸς) to their own wickedness—namely, “. . . to sexual impurity” (v. 24); “. . . to shameful lusts” (v. 26); and “. . . to a depraved mind” (v. 28). Paul indicates the severity of the consequences of God's wrath by repeating (three times) the expression, “God gave them over.” This does not mean that God causes humans to commit sin, but He, in fact, abandons them to their own passions as a form of His wrath.

God's revelation through natural or created order makes all individuals responsible to respond to their Creator in worship and submission; nevertheless, it does not furnish sufficient information for them to experience salvation. That is the reason that everyone needs to hear the gospel, and Paul was chosen to proclaim that gospel to all nations. As a missionary to the ἔθνη, he felt compelled to proclaim this God who revealed himself in nature. As a result of his missionary preaching, the Corinthians (12:2) converted from worshiping “mute idols” (τὰ ἑἰδωλα τὰ ἄφωνα); the Galatians (4:8) were freed from “beings that by nature are not gods” (τοῖς φύσει μὴ οὖσιν θεοῖς); and the Thessalonians (1 Thess 1:9) “turned to God from idols (ἀπὸ τῶν εἰδώλων) to serve the living and true God” (θεῷ ζῶντι καὶ ἀληθινῷ). Consequently, there is no doubt why Otto Michel calls this passage (1:18-32) an example of Paul's missionary preaching, which he

better, either. Its modern obsession with wealth, pleasure, beauty, sex, material acquisition, fame, success, sports, games, reason, secularism, nationalism, power, politics, religion, and countless other such things have become for many the new gods of the Western world. Commenting about this issue, Martin Luther says, “Whatever your heart clings to and confides in, that is really your god.”

must have proclaimed quite frequently.⁸³ Honoring God as God and giving Him thanks (1:21); and acknowledging and worshiping Him as the Creator are human beings' primary duties to God in view of who He is. God is the one who revealed himself in the creation, so that all people may confess and worship Him as the only Creator and Lord. This identity of God's self-revelation in the creation and its preaching to the nations set the foundation for Paul's worldwide mission.

God as the One Who Judges Impartially (2:5-11)

Paul continues to answer the question concerning God's identity by referring to what He does. Hence, he writes, "Who [God] will repay everyone according to his works" (2:6); and "On that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus" (2:16). The declaration that God's wrath is directed against all human ungodliness and wickedness rests on the conviction that God is impartial (2:11; cf. Gal 2:6), and thus He judges impartially. This description of God's judging activity characterizes Him as the One who judges impartially. This impartiality warrants the assertion that "the gospel is God's power for salvation for all who believe, first for the Jew but also for the Greek" (1:16). There is no distinction, and Jews and gentiles are treated as equals. In other words, God makes no distinctions between Jews and gentiles whether they are justified based on their faith or judged on the basis of their sinful actions.

⁸³Michel, *Der Brief an die Römer*, 51.

The interpreters of Romans approach this passage in numerous ways.⁸⁴ Some scholars consider the entire second chapter to be an interpolation,⁸⁵ while others find contradictions in Paul's theology.⁸⁶ According to them, in Romans 2, Paul states that justification can be achieved by good works (vv. 7-10) and then, in Romans 3, he refutes that one can become righteous before God by works of the law (3:19-20). In fact, Paul's theology is usually consistent within the context of the letter.⁸⁷ The most logical explanation of this issue is that Paul's purpose is showing that God will judge everyone, including the Jews, impartially; there will be no special favoritism whatsoever.⁸⁸ Still others maintain that Romans 2 describes situations before the advent of the gospel. For this reason, the text speaks of those who are justified by keeping the law.⁸⁹ The problem of their approach is that they have misunderstood the theme of 1:18-3:20 (cf. n. 43 above).

Others believe that Paul is speaking in this passage about gentile Christians, who will be saved in the last day if they fulfill the law through Christ.⁹⁰ Bell shows that

⁸⁴For a brief survey of different approaches, see Bell, *No One Seeks for God*, 132-36.

⁸⁵J. C. O'Neill, *Paul's Letter to the Romans* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1975), 264-65. There is no textual evidence for holding this view.

⁸⁶H. Räisänen, *Paul and the Law*, WUNT 29 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1983), 101-07; E. P. Sanders, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 123-36.

⁸⁷See Thomas R. Schreiner, "Did Paul Believe in Justification by Works? Another Look at Romans 2," *BBR* 3 (1993): 131-58; Bell, *No One Seeks for God*, 133.

⁸⁸Schreiner, *Romans*, 113.

⁸⁹Davis, *Faith and Obedience in Romans*, 53-70; Snodgrass, "Justification by Grace," 81; H. Boers, *The Justification of the Gentiles: Paul's Letters to the Galatians and Romans* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 97-99.

⁹⁰Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, vol. 1, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, ed. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance, trans. G. T. Thornton and H. Knight (Edinburgh: T. T. Clark, 1956), 340; Cranfield,

the gentiles who are referred to in this passage (2:14-16) are not Christian gentiles, but non-Christian gentiles.⁹¹ One must take seriously the context of these verses (2:1-16) in light of the whole passage (1:18-3:20), in which Paul is establishing that Jews and gentiles (all people) are moving toward judgment on the last day. For this reason, Romans 3:9-20 clearly indicates that no one will be acquitted through works of the law: both Jews and gentiles are under the power of sin (3:9).⁹² God renders all (Jews and gentiles) equitably and exactly in accordance with what their deeds deserve.

Jouette M. Bassler holds that divine impartiality is the central theological theme both for the opening argument of the letter (e.g., Rom 1-3 and 4) and for the letter as a whole (especially Rom 9-11 and 14-15).⁹³ Though the theme of divine impartiality could be one of the important themes, especially in those passages mentioned above, it is too much to insist on divine impartiality as the fundamental theological theme of the book of Romans, even in Romans 1-3.⁹⁴ In fact, the central theme of Romans is the gospel for which Paul was separated and called to preach both to the Jews and to the gentiles—that is, to all the nations of the world. Hence, E. Weber and others connect this passage, especially Romans 1-3, to Paul’s missionary preaching.⁹⁵ Weber understands the

The Epistle to the Romans, 1:152-62; Fitzmyer, 297.

⁹¹See his systematic argument: Bell, *No One Seeks for God*, 151-62. See also D. A. Carson, *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*, 4th ed. (Liechester/Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 1125.

⁹²Bell, *No One Seeks for God*, 62.

⁹³See Jouette M. Bassler, “Divine Impartiality in Paul’s Letter to the Romans,” *NovT* 26 (1984): 43-58. See also idem, *Divine Impartiality*, 7-44.

⁹⁴For a critique of Bassler’s view, see Bell, *No One Seeks for God*, 3-10.

⁹⁵Cited in Bell, *No One Seeks for God*, 21-2; 134; Michel, *Der Brief an die Römer*, 96;

announcement of guilt as the necessary precondition for the justification of the ungodly in preaching the gospel.⁹⁶ As it has been noted above that this gospel revealed God's saving righteousness as well as God's judging righteousness both to the Jews and to the gentiles, the former can be appropriated by faith, and the latter experienced as a result of their suppressing the truth and sinful actions.

Paul's purpose in this section is placing those who act in judgment of another (perhaps Paul has the Jews in mind, cf. 1:16; 2:9-11) in the same category as that of the gentile sinner in Romans 1.⁹⁷ Consequently, Paul begins Romans 2 with his accusation: the self-righteous Jew "practices the same things" (τὰ αὐτὰ πράσσεις) that the gentile sinners do (may be referring back to the evils listed in 1:29-31). He is therefore liable to the same condemnation (2:1-5) because by judging others, he condemns himself (cf. 2 Sam 12:7). This concept is remarkably similar to that mentioned in the gospel tradition (Matt 7:1-2)⁹⁸ or in other NT traditions (e.g., Jas 4:11-12; Jude 9; 2 Pet 2:11). The theme of this passage (vv. 6-11)⁹⁹ is that God will judge each one according to his or her works

Stuhlmacher, *Paul's Letter to the Romans*, 34; Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 94.

⁹⁶See Bell, *No One Seeks for God*, 134.

⁹⁷Seifrid, *Christ, Our Righteousness*, 51.

⁹⁸Ibid.; Bell, *No One Seeks for God*, 139.

⁹⁹The majority of scholars consider verses 6-11 to be one unit because, in vv. 1-4, Paul deals with the judgment of God against the self-righteous Jews, and v. 5 leads into vv. 6-11 with the theme that God shows no partiality in His judgment. Verse 6 introduces a new section with a common theme of God's impartial judgment in both its opening (v. 6) and closing (v. 11) verses. Thus, v. 5 is more closely related thematically to the divine judgment of vv. 1-4. However, grammatically, v. 5 is directly connected to v. 6, which begins with a relative clause ὅς (who) modifying God in v. 5. God will judge impenitent Jews (v. 5) because He will render each person, whether Jew or gentile, in accordance with his or her works (v. 6). See Schreiner, *Romans*, 111. Hence, some interpreters prefer to take vv. 1-4 as one unit and vv. 5-11 as the other. Similarly NIV; Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 60; Stott, *The Message of Romans*, 83; Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 114, and others.

(v. 6)¹⁰⁰ because He shows no partiality in His judgment (v.11). Paul defends his allegation of the self-appointed judge by showing that God will judge people according to what their works deserve. He must be referring to the OT, particularly to Psalm 62:12 (61:13 LXX) and possibly to Proverbs 24:12, due to the fact that the language and expressions are quite similar.¹⁰¹ This theme of God's impartiality is consistently taught in the OT,¹⁰² as well as in Jewish literature,¹⁰³ which demands that God should have no favorites, but should treat every person—whether Jew or gentile—in the same way.

Many scholars find a chiastic structure¹⁰⁴ in these verses (vv. 6-11), in which Paul illustrates God's impartial judgment in verses 6 and 11 and in verses 7-10—the two possible consequences of impartial judgment.¹⁰⁵ Thomas Schreiner, however, correctly demonstrates that verse 11 forms the basis for the entire section of verses 6-10, explaining that God will reward those who do good and punish those who practice evil

¹⁰⁰Schreiner (*Romans*, 112) points out that the v. 6 introduces the three themes that pervade these verses: (1) God will reward each person according to his or her *works* (ἔργα); (2) He will *reward* (ἀποδώσει) each person; and (3) He will reward *each person* (ἐκάστω).

¹⁰¹Schreiner, *Romans*, 112; Bell, *No One Seeks for God*, 141.

¹⁰²For instance, see Deut 10:17; 2 Chron 6:23; 19:7; Job 34:11; Pss 28:4; 62:12; Prov 24:12; Eccl 12:14; Jer 17:10; 25:14; 51:24; Ezek 18:20; 33:20; Hos 12:2.

¹⁰³For example, see 1 Enoch 41:1-2; Ps of Sol 2:16; 9:4-5; 17:8-9; 4 Ezra 6:19; 7:35; 8:33; Sir 16:12; 2 Bar 13:8; 14:12; Jub 21:4. Jouette Bassler has demonstrated that the theme of divine impartiality became an unbiased saying during the intertestamental period. See Bassler, *Divine Impartiality*, 7-44.

¹⁰⁴“A chiasm is a literary structure in which the elements are deliberately arranged by the author in parallel units, which repeat similar concepts in inverted order for the purpose of clarifying the meaning or directing attention to a central theme” (see John Breck, “Biblical Chiasmus: Exploring Structures for Meaning,” *BTB* 17 [1987], 71).

¹⁰⁵Kendrick Grobel, “A Chiastic Retribution in Romans 2,” in *Zeit und Geschichte: Dankesgabe an Rudolf Bultmann zum 80 Geburtstag*, ed. E. Dinkler (Tübingen: Mohr, 1964), 255-61; Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 135-36; Osborne, *Romans*, 63; Carson, *New Bible Commentary*, 1124.

because (γάρ, v.11) He is impartial.¹⁰⁶ In essence, God's impartial action is the reason that He judges each individual person according to his or her deeds. Paul warns that those who will not repent are storing up wrath for themselves (v. 5) because God will treat everyone according to his or her deeds (v. 6). This principle of repaying everyone according to his or her works is articulated in more detail in verses 7-10, which form a remarkable chiasmic structure in reverse order, and display the two possible consequences of judgment in reverse order.¹⁰⁷ The following outline shows this structure:

- A God will repay everyone in accordance with his or her work (v. 6)
- B Eternal life will be for those who persevere in doing good (v. 7)
- C God's wrath will be for those who continue doing evil (v. 8)
- C¹ Tribulation and distress will be for those who persist in doing evil (v. 9)
- B¹ Glory, honor, and peace will be for those who practice good (v. 10)
- D Because God does not show favoritism (v. 11)

The function of this chiasm is simply underscoring the two possible consequences of God's act of judgment according to works. Paul relates this teaching about God's impartial judgment obviously to Jew and gentile (vv. 9-10). Paul demonstrates the whole purpose of God's measure of judging Jews, which will not be different from the standard He uses for gentiles.

In verses 7-8, the theme of divine retribution (v. 6) is explicated by contrasting good and evil works. Paul employs this theme first with those who, "by perseverance of a good work" (καθ' ὑπομονὴν ἔργου ἀγαθοῦ), seek glory (δόξαν), honor (τιμὴν), and immortality (ἀφθαρσίαν); God will render eternal life (v. 7). Good work is a defining

¹⁰⁶Schreiner, *Romans*, 111-13. According to Jouette M. Bassler ("Divine Impartiality in Romans," 49), Rom 2:11 functions as the theological affirmation for vv. 9-10, which proclaim the equality of Jew and gentile in punishment and in blessing.

¹⁰⁷Cf. Bell, *No One Seeks for God*, 141.

quality of a person for gaining eternal life. Hence, the whole phrase portrays “the manner in which the eternal life is sought,” which is by consistently persevering in a good work.¹⁰⁸ Paul does not promote eternal life by doing good works, else he will contradict his own consistent teaching that “no one can be righteous before God by the works of the law” (Rom 3:20; see also Rom 4:2; Gal 3:2-5, 11; 2 Tim 1:9; Titus 3:5). Paul’s main purpose for using divine retribution according to works is “showing the Jews that God is impartial, that there will be no special favoritism for them.”¹⁰⁹ In verse 8, Paul places this divine retribution in juxtaposition to verse 7. For those who disobey (ἀπειθοῦσι) the truth (namely, the truth about God in 1:18-20), but obey (πειθομένοις δὲ) unrighteousness (ἀδικία) out of selfish ambition (ἐξ ἐριθείας),¹¹⁰ God will execute wrath and anger (ὀργὴ καὶ θυμός). This evidently is connected to 1:18, where God reveals His wrath to those who suppress the truth in unrighteousness (τὴν ἀλήθειαν ἐν ἀδικίᾳ κατεχόντων). Paul, perhaps, is comparing the self-righteous Jews with the gentiles in 1:18-32, who disobeyed the truth and have pursued evil. They, too, will face divine wrath.¹¹¹ This link between the two chapters reinforces the thesis that God impartially judges all who practice evil.¹¹²

In verses 9-10, Paul restates the theme of divine retribution (v. 6) by contrasting good and evil works, and blessing and punishment, but in the reverse order

¹⁰⁸Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 135; Schreiner, *Romans*, 112.

¹⁰⁹Ibid., 113.

¹¹⁰There is a general agreement about this meaning. See BDAG, 392; H. M. F. Büchsel, “ἐριθείας,” *TDNT* 2: 660-61; Stott, *The Message of Romans*, 84; Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 138; Schreiner, *Romans*, 113; Osborne, *Romans*, 65.

¹¹¹Osborne, *Romans*, 65.

¹¹²Schreiner, *Romans*, 113.

(see above). He makes three changes and reaffirms that God will judge everyone impartially. First of all, Paul clarifies the two groups of people in simple terms, with “every human being” (πᾶσαν ψυχὴν ἀνθρώπου, literally, “every soul of a man”) who does evil (v. 9); and “everyone” (παντὶ) who does good (v. 10). This again stresses God’s act of absolutely fair judgment; every individual person will receive exactly what he/she deserves. Second, in a similar way, Paul elaborates further the punishment and reward of verses 7-8. Those who commit evil will face “tribulation and distress” (θλίψις καὶ στενοχωρία, v. 9), depicting further human anguish and misery that will go hand-in-hand with God’s wrath (v. 8). Those who do good will experience “glory and honor” (v. 10), repeating verse 7 and adding “peace,” emphasizing eternal relationship with God (cf. 1:7; 5:1). Third, Paul places “every human being” in two specific groups of people—as “the Jew first and also the Greek” (Ἰουδαίου τε πρῶτον καὶ Ἑλλήνος)—reaffirming that God will render judgment to everyone with complete impartiality. As in 1:16, the Jews have priority in salvation, so also they have priority in judgment and reward.

So far, Paul has been contending (1:18-2:11) that God’s judgment extends to all on the basis of works, without any regard for ethnic distinction. But what about the law? The Jews, who possess the law, may think of deserving favoritism—as compared with the gentiles—who are without the law. As a result, Paul continues the theme of God’s impartial judging activity of verse 11, and elaborates additionally on those without the law (gentiles, v. 12) and with the law (Jews, vv. 12-13). Neither has any advantage in comparison with the other pertaining to the law. All stand equally guilty before God because those who have God’s law (the law of Moses) failed to keep it (the Jews, v. 13), and those who do not have that law (the gentiles) still have God’s law written on their

hearts (vv. 14-15). This clearly alludes to Jeremiah 31:33.¹¹³ Those who sin (ἡμαρτον) without the law will perish without it. Those who sin inside it will be judged by it. Verse 16 refers to eschatological judgment, when God judges not only everyone's outward practices, but also his or her secrets (τὰ κρυπτὰ), as well, implying "inner motivation, feelings, and thoughts of our hearts."¹¹⁴

God will execute His judgment through Jesus Christ according to Paul's gospel, which he was called to preach. Judgment standards will be Paul's gospel. For this reason, God's judgment is part of the gospel and should be the focus of missionary preaching.¹¹⁵ On one hand, the gospel proclamation will provide equal opportunity for all to hear God's impartial judgment upon everyone due to the fact that everyone (both Jew and gentile) sins (cf. 3:23). On the other hand, everyone will equally hear the need of God's mercy and forgiving grace as manifested in His saving righteousness through Christ's work.¹¹⁶ Hence, Paul's characterization of God—as the One who judges everyone impartially, according to Paul's gospel—provides the reason for the missionary proclamation of the gospel to the nations.

God as the One Who Manifests His Righteousness in Christ's Work (3:21-26)

Paul has clearly exposed the universality of sin and its terrible consequence for

¹¹³Cranfield, *The Letter to the Romans*, 155.

¹¹⁴Johnson, *Romans*, 56.

¹¹⁵Stott, *The Message of Romans*, 88.

¹¹⁶Contra Jouette M. Bassler, "Luke and Paul on Impartiality," *Bib* 66 (1985): 551. Bassler insists that God achieved impartial treatment for Jews and gentiles as a result of a new interpretation of the OT and Jewish notion of God's impartiality.

all humankind (1:18-3:20). He declares that on account of works of the law “all, both Jews and Greeks,¹¹⁷ are under sin” (3:9) and “no human being (οὐ . . . πᾶσα σὰρξ) will be justified” before God (3:20). As a result, because of the law, “the whole world is under judgment,” and God will impartially judge the whole world according to the gospel that Paul was called to preach (2:16). In Romans 3:23, he reinforces the reality of universal sin that “all have sinned (πάντες ἥμαρτον) and fall short of the glory of God” because all (both Jews and gentiles) are seeking their own glory and honor, instead of God’s glory (2:23, 29; 1:23-25). Paul plainly demonstrates the reality of a universal need for salvation (Rom 1:18-3:20), and declares that this salvation is available only through “the righteousness of God” (δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ),¹¹⁸ which is the theme that Paul reintroduces in 3:21-26. The theme of God’s righteousness is the focal point standing at the center of his discussion that sums up the basic gospel in this passage.

In 1:17, Paul restates the theme of the letter, which is “the gospel,” introduced as “the power of God for salvation for everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek” (v.16). It is explained as the means by which “the righteousness of God” is revealed. In 3:21-26, Paul turns from universal sin and its serious consequence—namely, “the wrath of God” (1:18-3:20)—to the theme of “the righteousness of God” (δικαιοσύνη

¹¹⁷Jews and Greeks combination includes “all humankind.” See also notes on 1:16.

¹¹⁸For a detailed discussion and histories of research, see Manfred T. Brauch, “Perspectives on God’s Righteousness in Recent German Discussion,” in E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), 523-42; Mark Seifrid, *Justification by Faith: The Origin and Development of a Central Pauline Thought*, NTSup (Leiden: Brill, 1992), 1-75; idem, *Christ, Our Righteousness*, 35-76; John Reumann, “The Gospel of Righteousness of God: Pauline Reinterpretation of Romans 3:21-31,” *Int* 20 (1966): 432-52; idem, “Righteousness (Early Judaism, Greco-Roman World, and NT),” *ABD* 5: 736-73; Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 79-90; Thomas R. Schreiner, *Paul, Apostle of God’s Glory in Christ: A Pauline Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2001), 192-217. For a brief survey of a modern debate, see Ronald Y. K. Fung, “The Status of Justification by

θεοῦ) manifested apart from the law (3:20, 21), but in the work of Jesus Christ appropriated through faith (3:21-4:25). This idea of God's saving righteousness, through faith in Christ's work, is one of the dominant ideas in the letter, especially in 3:21-26.¹¹⁹ Once again, Paul's characterization of God is encountered in His saving activity, through Christ's work, for the salvation of the whole world. God's identity thus is declared not only as the One who judges impartially for the sins of all humankind, but as the One who manifests His saving righteousness in Christ's work as well "for all (πάντας) who believe" without any distinction (vv. 21-22). In the context of the passage, "all" includes both "Jew and gentile."

Contemporary interpretation of the phrase "the righteousness of God" is affected by the genitive construction θεοῦ (of God).¹²⁰ The phrase, "the righteousness of God," refers to the believer's status before God.¹²¹ It stresses the saving initiative God has taken to offer sinners a righteous status before Him. Therefore, a number of

Faith in Paul's Thought: A Brief Survey of a Modern Debate," *Themelios* 26 (1981): 4-11.

¹¹⁹It has become increasingly acknowledged in a number of recent discussions that "the righteousness of God," or "justification by faith," is only one of the dominant ideas among many, and the scholars have different ideas. For a discussion and bibliography, see Seifrid, *Justification by Faith*, 6-25; Schreiner, *Paul*, 192-95. However, in the history of the interpretation of Romans, many scholars maintain that it is the center of Paul's theology, especially since the Reformation period, among the majority of Protestants. For recent bibliography, see Schreiner, *Paul*, 193-94, n. 8. Some scholars consider this section to be the center of Paul's theology in Romans. For example, W. S. Campbell, "Romans 3 as a Key to the Structure and Thought of the Epistle," *NovT* 23 (1981): 22-40. See Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 1: 199; cf. Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 173; Johnson, *Romans*, 71.

¹²⁰Interpreters of Romans have been debating the issue of whether the Greek construction of δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ should be interpreted as subjective or objective genitive. For a survey of the scholarly debate about this matter and the meaning of the phrase, see Arland J. Hultgren, *Paul's Gospel and Mission: The Outlook from His Letter to the Romans* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 12-18; Schreiner, *Romans*, 62-65.

¹²¹Rom 1:17; 3:21-22; 4:3, 5-6, 9, 11, 13, 22; 10:3-4, 6, 10; Gal 2:20-21; 3:6, 21-22; 5:5; Phil 3:9.

interpreters of Romans comprehend the genitive θεοῦ as a “genitive of origin”—righteousness from God (similarly NIV).¹²² In other words, “righteousness” proceeds from God and is bestowed on the believer as an alien righteousness (Rom 1:17; 3:21-22; 10:3; Phil 3:9). It refers to the humans’ righteous status, which is the result of God’s action of justification.¹²³ It is a gift from God in which a person is declared not guilty before God. In other words, a guilty person is declared righteous before God. It is a forensic term, signifying that people who are still sinners stand as not guilty before God because of the gift of God’s righteousness (Rom 8:33).¹²⁴

Others identify the genitive θεοῦ as a “subjective genitive” to recognize “the righteousness of God” in terms of God’s saving power. It expresses God’s dynamic, saving action toward the sinful world that is manifested in Christ’s work.¹²⁵ According to

¹²²Martin Luther understood it in this way, and many even today continue to defend this interpretation. For instance, John Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Romans and to the Thessalonians*, ed. D. W. Torrance and T. F. Torrance, trans. R. MacKenzie, Calvin’s Commentaries (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1960), 28; Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, 270-87; idem, “*Dikaïosynē Theou*,” *JBL* 83 (1964): 12-16; Nygren, *Commentary on Romans*, 75; G. Bornkamm, *Paul*, trans. D. M. G. Stalker (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 138; Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 1: 95-99; Stott, *The Message of Romans*, 109; Seifrid, *Justification by Faith*, 215; Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 67-72; Robert H. Mounce, *Romans*, NAC 27 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1995), 36-39, 72-73.

¹²³Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 1: 97. Schreiner (*Romans*, 64-67) has demonstrated God’s righteousness as both “a divine gift and one’s own status before God” (refers to the genitive of origin) and “a divine activity that transforms the lives of the believers” (refers to the subjective genitive).

¹²⁴Cf. Deut 25:1; Exod 23:7; 2 Sam 15:4; 1 Kgs 8:32; Isa 5:23.

¹²⁵For example, Ernst Käsemann, “The Righteousness of God in Paul,” in *New Testament Questions of Today*, trans. W. J. Montague (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1969), 168-82; idem, *Commentary on Romans*, trans. W. G. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 23-25; Dodd, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans*, 10; Stuhlmacher, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans*, 61-65; Hultgren, *Paul’s Gospel and Mission*, 16; J. A. Ziesler, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans*, TPINTC (Philadelphia: TPI Press International, 1989), 70-71; Dunn, *Romans*, 1-8, 41-42; D. B. Garlington, *Faith, Obedience, and Perseverance: Aspects of Paul’s Letter to the Romans*, WUNT 79 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1994), 44-49; A. Schlatter, *Romans: The Righteousness of God*, trans. S. S. Schatzmann (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995), 20-22.

Ernst Käsemann, the expression communicates God's saving activity or His nature.¹²⁶

Numerous OT passages (e.g., Pss 72:1-3; 98:1-3; 143:1-3a; Isa 51:16; Jer 22:3) present evidence to the fact that "God's righteousness" signifies "an act of God in which his saving righteousness is displayed."¹²⁷ The phrase appears four times in this passage, at its opening and at its closing (vv. 21, 22 and 25, 26), while the occurrence of two cognate words—"justify" (δικαίω, vv. 24, 26) and 'just' (δίκαιος, v. 26)—reinforces its centrality and God's action for the salvation of the entire world. Paul connects "the righteousness of God" with the characterization of God's action for the salvation of the nations in the following verses.

With "but now" (νυνὶ δέ)¹²⁸ in 3:21, Paul announces that a new era has dawned upon the sinful world. Worldwide sin is being overcome as a result of the sacrificial act of Jesus Christ. This shows "a salvation-historical shift between the old covenant and the New." Also, "God's saving righteousness" has been "actualized in history" through the

¹²⁶Käsemann, "The Righteousness of God in Paul," 169-72. As a result of this understanding, Käsemann disagrees with the views that the righteousness of God is a divine gift and a status before God, which emphasize individual righteousness before God (anthropological interest), rather than God's righteousness as a power to work in the world (a cosmic and theo-logical concern). This interpretation has strong scriptural support; however, Käsemann and others interpret "God's righteousness" as His "covenant-faithfulness" toward Israel. This may be true in the sense that God is righteous, who has fulfilled His promises to save His people. God's action, though, cannot properly be called covenantal or associated with the covenant. For a critique of this view, see Seifrid, *Christ, Our Righteousness*, 38-45; idem, *Justification by Faith*, 37-46; Schreiner, *Paul, Apostle of God's Glory in Christ*, 197-201.

¹²⁷Seifrid, *Christ, Our Righteousness*, 38-39. See also Schreiner, *Romans*, 66.

¹²⁸This exclusive Pauline formula is frequently used to indicate a shift in the argument. It may denote a logical contrast to a preceding argument (for example, Godet, *Commentary on Romans*, 146, and others), or a contrast to a previously mentioned time period. Most commentators seem to agree with the latter, indicating "a salvation-historical shift" from the law-inclusive old covenant to the law-free new covenant, which is inaugurated through Christ's coming and His sacrificial death on the cross. (For instance, Franz J. Leenhardt, *The Epistle to the Romans: A Commentary*, trans. Harold Knight [London: Lutterworth, 1961], 98; Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 164; Walter Radl, "νῦν, νυνί," *EDNT* 2: 481; Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 221; Schreiner, *Romans*, 180).

work of Jesus Christ.¹²⁹ Paul declares that “the righteousness of God” has been revealed (as in 1:17) to all on an equal basis. In the first instance, he is referring to God’s action toward humanity by manifesting (φανερῶ) His saving righteousness in Jesus Christ. The perfect tense πεφανερώται (has been manifested) refers to the historical fact of God’s divine action in Jesus Christ: namely, His death and resurrection, and their continuing effect for “all who believe” in the present (cf. 1:17).

This action of God’s saving righteousness is “apart from the law,” yet it is testified or witnessed (μαρτυρουμένη) in the OT Scriptures (“the law and the prophets,” 3:21b).¹³⁰ In other words, this change is in keeping with the OT promise, which God reveals in the gospel. This means that the OT prepared this new way of experiencing God’s eternal promise of salvation—that is, His saving righteousness (cf. Jer 31:31-34; Heb 8:8-12). God’s justifying activity is offered to both Jews and gentiles “*apart from* the law” (χωρὶς νόμου, 3:21; cf. 3:20), and “*through* faith in Jesus Christ” (διὰ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, 3:22). These prepositions χωρὶς (apart from) and διὰ (through), which are opposites, illustrates Paul’s emphasis on the ending of the old era and the beginning of the new era of God’s saving righteousness, realized with the coming of Jesus Christ.

Second, as in 1:17, Paul instantly connects this saving activity of God with faith as a response to it. Consequently, he emphasizes the universal character of God’s saving action. Paul asserts that experiencing God’s saving activity, which is possible only

¹²⁹Schreiner, *Romans*, 180.

¹³⁰The phrase, “the law and the prophets,” is a frequent way of referring to the entire Old Testament. See, for example, Matt 11:13; Luke 16:16; Acts 24:14, etc.). For OT background and references, see Hultgren, *Paul’s Gospel and Mission*, 21-25.

“through faith in Jesus Christ,” is for “all who believe.” Hence, the genitive *πίστεως* is traditionally understood as an objective genitive: that is, “faith in Christ.”¹³¹ Then the double usage of the word *πίστις/πιστεύω* (faith/believe)—in the phrases *διὰ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ* (through faith in Jesus Christ) and *εἰς πάντας τοὺς πιστεύοντας* (for all who believe) in verse 22—indicates Paul’s emphasis on faith as a response to the saving righteousness of God.¹³² There is a great debate, though, about the genitive *πίστεως* regarding if it should be interpreted as objective genitive or subjective genitive.¹³³

Some interpreters of Romans consider this double use of “faith” differently. In recent years, many scholars have been convinced that the phrase *διὰ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ* is a subjective genitive, referring to Jesus’ own faithfulness to God.¹³⁴ As a result they translate the expression as “through the faithfulness of Jesus Christ,” which means that—through Christ’s faithfulness and obedience—God has extended His saving grace

¹³¹So RSV; NIV; NASV; NRSV; ESV; Barclay M. Newman and Eugene A. Nida, *Translator’s Handbook on Paul’s Letter to the Romans* (London: United Bible Societies, 1973), 65; O’Neill, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans*, 70-72; Seifrid, *Christ, Our Righteousness*, 139-46; Gary W. Burnett, *Paul and the Salvation of the Individual*, BI 57 (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 154-58; Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 225; C. E. B. Cranfield, “On the Πίστις Χριστοῦ Question,” in *On Romans and Other New Testament Essays* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1998), 81-97; Jewett, *Romans*, 278. A

¹³²Johnson, *Romans*, 73.

¹³³With respect to the debate concerning subjective vs objective genitive, see Richard B. Hays, “‘ΠΙΣΤΙΣ’ and Pauline Christology: What Is at Stake?” in *Pauline Theology*, vol. 4, *Looking Back, Pressing On*, ed. E. Elizabeth Johnson and David M. Hay, SBL Symposium Series 4 (Atlanta, GA: Scholars, 1997), 36; Arland Hultgren, “The *Pistis Christou* Formulation in Paul,” *NovT* 22 (1980): 148-63; Morna D. Hooker, “*Pistis Christou*,” *NTS* 35 (1989): 321-42; Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 224-25; Jewett, *Romans*, 275-78.

¹³⁴Marcus Barth, “The Faith of the Messiah,” *HeyJ* 10 (1969): 363-70; D. W. B. Robinson, “The Faith of Jesus Christ—A New Testament Debate,” *RTR* 29 (1970): 71-81; Sam K. Williams, “The Righteousness of God in Romans,” *JBL* 99 (1980): 272-78; George Howard, “On the Faith of Christ,” *HTR* 60 (1967): 459-65; Luke T. Johnson, “Romans 3:21-26 and the Faith of Jesus,” *CBQ* 44 (1982): 77-90; Hays, “‘ΠΙΣΤΙΣ’ and Pauline Christology,” 714-29.

to all people. For this reason, they experience God’s saving righteousness by their participation in Christ’s faithfulness and obedience in their own lives.¹³⁵ This meaning is not clearly attested elsewhere in Paul. Even this entire section repeatedly focuses on the importance of human faith in Christ for justification (cf. v. 26).¹³⁶ Thus, in verse 22, he stresses that God’s saving righteousness comes only by faith in Christ to everyone who has such faith.

Verses 22b-23, which underline the necessity for God’s saving righteousness, provide a concise summary of 1:18-3:20. Paul emphasizes that “for (γάρ) there is no distinction” (e.g., between Jew and gentile, those with the knowledge of the Scripture and those without the knowledge of it, wise and foolish, rich and poor, moral and sinful), “for (γάρ) all (πάντες) have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (note the γάρ with each phrase). Everyone, without distinction, must believe God’s saving activity in Christ’s sacrificial work because “all have sinned (literally, ‘sinned’) and fall short of the glory of God.” The verb “have sinned” is in the past tense (Greek, aorist), referring to universal sin begun at the Fall of Adam; and “fall short” (ὑστερέω, meaning “fall short,” or “lack,” or “in need of,” or “deprived of”) is in the present tense, showing continued sin in the present. This signifies the historical fact¹³⁷ of the human, perpetual, sinful condition,

¹³⁵Hays, “ΠΙΣΤΙΣ” and Pauline Christology,” 55-57.

¹³⁶For a defense of the traditional view, see Seifrid, *Christ, Our Righteousness*, 140-42.

¹³⁷It refers to the “original sin” of the first man, Adam, the origin of the human race, whose sin blemished God’s image in him; since then, all his descendants, Jews and gentiles—that is, all human beings—have borne the image of the sinful man. For a defense of the doctrine of “original sin,” see H. Blocher, *Original Sin* (Leicester: Apollos, 1997).

leading to a present falling short of “the glory of God.”¹³⁸ Thus, all, Jews and gentiles, stand as sinners, guilty before God and deserving judgment. God created human beings in His own image and for His own glory (Gen 1:27; Isa 43:7), so that they might reflect His image and His glory. Subsequently, human beings lost this divine glory, which has affected the entire human race (1:23; 3:23; cf. 1:18-3:20). This places the Jews and the gentiles on the same level. According to Mark Seifrid, “Universal fallenness and redemption, not ethnic differences, define the human condition.”¹³⁹ Hence, people’s faith in Christ’s redemptive work alone restores the fully intended image and glory of God.

Correspondingly, Paul now draws attention to the sources of the justifying work of God in verses 24-25.¹⁴⁰ As in 1:17, he declares that the sacrificial work of Jesus imparts God’s saving righteousness through faith alone, and those who have faith in His work are “justified freely by His grace as a gift.” The dative construction τῇ αὐτοῦ χάριτι (by His grace) emphasizes that the nature of the gift of the new relationship of “being right before God” explicitly comes from the giver.¹⁴¹ Therefore, God’s saving action of declaring human beings into a new and right relationship with himself is an act of His unmerited favor (cf. 4:4-5, 13-16). God has done so freely; this saving work is a gift of

¹³⁸Cf. Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 177.

¹³⁹Seifrid, *Christ, Our Righteousness*, 65.

¹⁴⁰Many scholars regard verses 24-25 or 24-26 as being borrowed from the pre-Pauline tradition. They have reached this decision on the basis of non-Pauline language in these verses. For example, Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 173, and Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 163-64. Other scholars strongly disagree with this assessment, and contend that there is not enough evidence to arrive at this conclusion. It is very much Paul’s composition. See John Piper, *The Justification of God: An Exegetical and Theological Study of Romans 9:1-23*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1993), 136-140; Schreiner, *Romans*, 188; Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 227.

¹⁴¹Jewett, *Romans*, 282.

God (as in Eph 2:9). It is not a human work, but God's gracious act that brings justification. This is the reason that faith, which is an act of acknowledgment and submission, is necessary to experience God's saving righteousness.

The source of God's saving action—namely, justification—is in the “redemption that is in Christ Jesus.” The term “redemption” (ἀπολύτρωσις) literally conveys an act of “paying a ransom” to free someone from slavery (3:9).¹⁴² Christ's death on the cross and His shed blood (3:25) are the price of redemption (Eph 1:7; cf. Acts 20:28; 1 Cor 6:20). Redemption is found in the resurrection of the crucified Christ. For this reason, God in Christ made full payment for sin so that a sinner might be freed from its bondage. Paul further delineates that God's saving action of justifying a sinner takes place in Jesus' “sacrifice of atonement” (ἱλαστήριον) on the cross.¹⁴³ Christ's atoning death constitutes a demonstration of God's own righteousness (justice, so also NIV) and holiness (vv. 25-26).

Paul's usage of “the righteousness of God” in verses 21-22 refers to God's act for human beings in the sacrifice of Jesus. As in 3:5, it refers to God's own righteousness manifested in Christ's death. In the past, God has “passed over” (πάρεσις), or failed to punish, the former sins of His people because of His patience (τῇ ἀνοχῇ τοῦ θεοῦ). He is patient and merciful with sinners (Acts 14:16; 17:30). God's patience may be intended to

¹⁴²For a brief survey of a scholarly debate and a defense for the meaning of “paying a ransom,” see Schreiner, *Romans*, 189-91.

¹⁴³This term has been variously translated and understood. For a survey of scholarly debate about the meaning of the term, see Schreiner, *Romans*, 191-94. See also Stott, *The Message of Romans*, 113-16.

bring human beings to repentance (2:9).¹⁴⁴ On the cross, however, Jesus paid the penalty for the former sins of His people, manifesting God to be ‘just’ (δίκαιον) both in His passing over ‘of those sins committed beforehand’ (τῶν προγεγονότων ἁμαρτημάτων, v. 25b) and in ‘justifying’ (δικαιοῦντα) sinners at ‘the present time’ (ἐν τῷ νῦν καιρῷ, v. 26a). This is a clearly visible “demonstration” (ἐνδείξιν, vv. 25, 26; note Paul’s earlier expression of “revelation/manifestation, 1:17; 3:21) of God’s saving righteousness for His people. As a result—in Christ’s death on the cross and His resurrection—God is now seen in these verses as the One who is both ‘just’ and the One who ‘justifies’ those with faith in Jesus Christ. It is in the death and resurrection of Jesus that Paul unifies God’s attribute as ‘just’ and His action as ‘to justify’ for describing “the righteousness of God.” Christ’s death and resurrection allow God to remain God—morally perfect—and yet ready to forgive and receive sinners. James Denney provides a convincing summary of this passage:

There can be no gospel unless there is such a thing as a righteousness of God for the ungodly. But just as little can there be any gospel unless the integrity of God’s character be maintained. The problem of the sinful world, the problem of all religion, the problem of God in dealing with a sinful race, is how to unite these two things. The Christian answer to the problem is given by Paul in the words: “Jesus Christ whom God set forth a propitiation (or, in propitiatory power) in His blood.”¹⁴⁵

Even in the present, God’s justice, holiness, and hatred of sin are perfectly maintained.

So, God—in His grace through the gospel—receives sinful human beings, who respond through faith in Christ, and places them in right standing with Him.¹⁴⁶ This

¹⁴⁴Seifrid, *Christ, Our Righteousness*, 65.

¹⁴⁵James Denney, *The Death of Christ*, ed. R. V. G. Tasker (London: Tyndale Press, 1951), 98.

¹⁴⁶Johnson, *Romans*, 78-79.

characterization of God sets Him quite differently than any pagan gods.

**God as the One True God Who Justifies
Both the Jews and the Gentiles (3:29-30)**

In addition to the characterization of God's action in His self-revelation through the creation, His impartial judgment upon all, and His saving righteousness in Christ's work to all who respond in faith, there is another characterization of God's act that is linked with the salvation of the nations. Namely, the oneness of God justifies both Jews and gentiles. Romans 3:29-30 is considered to be one of the three monotheistic texts,¹⁴⁷ in which Paul resonates the Shema (Deut 6:4).

Or is God the God of the Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also. Since God is One—who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith (3:29-30).

Paul has already taught that God justifies everyone by faith (justification by faith) in 3:21-26, which is the solution to human beings' plight as described in 1:18-3:20. Building on this thesis, he positions his opposition to the notion of Jewish legalism (3:20; 21-26; 28),¹⁴⁸ and draws several conclusions from the passage. First, justification by faith

¹⁴⁷The other two references are 1 Cor 8:6 and Gal 3:19-20. Although the essential features of these three texts are the same, their usage in the specific context presents some obvious differences. For a discussion pertaining to these texts, see Seifrid, "The Knowledge of the Creator."

¹⁴⁸This notion of Paul's opposition to Jewish legalism was severely criticized by the proponents of the so-called "new perspective" on Paul, which is a movement that owes its stimulus to E. P. Sanders, and it is then followed by J. D. G. Dunn and many others. According to Sanders (*Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977]; idem, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People*, 17-64, 100-64), for the Jews, the issue is not receiving the covenant, but staying in it by faithfully observing "the works of the law." The law was meant for maintaining their relationship with Yahweh, and the "works of the law" were simply the means by which one remained in the covenant. He calls this "covenant nomism." Modifying Sanders' view, Dunn (*Romans 1-8*, 153-54) interprets "the works of the law" as "the boundary markers" that distinguish a Jew from a gentile (158). See also Dunn, "The New Perspective on Paul," *BJRL* 65 (1983): 95-112; idem, "The Works of the Law and the Curse of Law (Galatians 3:1014)," *NTS* 31 (1985): 523-42; idem, "Yet Once More—The Works of the Law: A Response," *JSNT* 46 (1992): 99-117; Krister Stendahl, "The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West," *HTR* 56 (1963): 199-215; idem, *Paul among Jews and Gentiles and Other Essays*

excludes any possibility of boasting (v. 27). Second, justification can take place only by faith and not by keeping the law (v. 28). Third, the “oneness” of God demands that God is the God of the gentiles as well as that of the Jews (vv. 29-30). Thus, gentiles are included in the people of God through faith alone. Finally, the centrality of faith establishes, rather than nullifies, the law (v. 31). The principle set forth in verses 27-28 is that justification by faith cancels any boasting that comes by observing the law or “works of the law.”¹⁴⁹ Paul makes this truth more explicitly in Galatians: “. . . A person is not justified by the works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law, because by the works of the law no one will be justified” (Gal 2:16). Therefore, it is clear that works of the law have no part in the process of justification (cf. Eph 2:8-9). Consequently, Paul begins with ἢ (“or,” note that the NIV omits it), marking an alternative to the principle suggested in vv. 27-28, or a fresh argument is being introduced.¹⁵⁰

Paul begins his new argument with the question “Is God the God of the Jews

(Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976); Räisänen, *Paul and the Law*, 162-77; Francis Watson, *Paul, Judaism, and the Gentiles: A Sociological Approach*, SNTS 56 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 63-72, 132-42; N. T. Wright, *What Saint Paul Really Said: Was Paul of Tarsus the Real Founder of Christianity?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), and many others who have been subsequently influenced by “the new perspective.” This view has correctly been challenged by C. E. B. Cranfield, “‘The Works of the Law’ in the Epistle to the Romans,” *JSNT* 43 (1991): 89-101; Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 206-17; Schreiner, *Romans*, 171-74; idem, “Paul and Perfect Obedience to the Law: An Evaluation of the View of E. P. Sanders,” *WTJ* 47 (1985): 245-78; Seifrid, *Justification by Faith*, 46-75; William B. Barclay, *Gospel Clarity: Challenging the New Perspective on Paul* (Carlisle, PA: EP Books, 2010).

¹⁴⁹For example, commandments, circumcision, observing food laws, ceremonial or ritual laws, observing special holidays, and the Sabbath. For a more detailed analysis of the various positions, see Schreiner, “Works of the Law,” *NovT* 33 (1991): 217-44; idem, *Romans*, 169-74; Seifrid, *Christ, Our Righteousness*, 99-105; Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 211-17.

¹⁵⁰See Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 1: 221; Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 251; Schreiner, *Romans*, 205.

only?” He rejects that “if justification is by ‘works of the law,’ then only those ‘in the law’ can be justified, and God becomes the God of Jews only.”¹⁵¹ Hence, Paul presents another argument in support of justification by faith, which will enable inclusion of the ἔθνη in the people of God. He skillfully presents this alternative argument with a question as he does in vv. 27-28. “Is he not the God of Gentiles also?” To this question Paul gives the answer that is already implicit in the form of the question. “Yes, [He is God] of Gentiles also.” Certainly, the Jews were the chosen people. God had given them His special revelation (3:2), including the Torah, as well (cf. 9:4-5). The gentiles do not share or participate in any of these privileges. However, God always wanted to draw the gentiles to Him. (Gen 12:1-3; Exod 19:5-6; Isa 42:6; 49:6). For this reason, the Lord particularly chose Israel out of the nations to be a witness for Him. Moreover, Paul asserts that God of the Jews is the God of the entire world, including the gentiles. The Jews, however, failed to recognize that their privileges were not meant for the exclusion of the gentiles, but for their ultimate inclusion when God promised that—through Abraham’s posterity—“all peoples on earth” would be blessed (Gen 12:1-3).¹⁵² Christ has fulfilled this promise God made with Abraham. Jesus is the seed of Abraham, and through His cross and resurrection, the blessing of salvation reaches everyone who believes, without exclusion or any discrimination.¹⁵³

In verse 30, Paul explains the reason that God must be the God of the Jews,

¹⁵¹Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 251.

¹⁵²It should be noted that Jews commonly believe the universality of Yahweh’s lordship. See Dahl, “The One God of Jews and Gentiles,” 178-91.

¹⁵³Stott, *The Message of Romans*, 120.

along with that of the nations: “Since (εἴπερ, it has the causal meaning)¹⁵⁴ God is one.” He cites the central Jewish teaching of the “oneness” of God, referring to the *Shema*’, “the Lord our God is one Lord” (Deut 6:4), as another argument in favor of the exclusivity of faith. If God is one, then God must be God of the gentiles, of the entire world, not only of the Jews. Paul interprets the “oneness” of God in terms of His universal rule; however, the *Shema*’ appears as a warning against serving pagan gods at the time when Israel enters into the Promised Land. In the Deuteronomy account, Israel’s affirmation of her God, Yahweh, as “one” is not an abstract idea. This declaration is associated with God’s action. Mark Seifrid points out, “It arises from the Lord’s saving deliverance of Israel from Egypt, an unparalleled act that sets the Lord apart from the gods of the nations (Deut 4:19-20, 32-40).”¹⁵⁵ Similarly, others recognize this “oneness” of God as a confirmation of the Lord’s distinctiveness, manifested in powerful, saving action on Israel’s behalf.¹⁵⁶

Correspondingly, in the narrative of Exodus, God’s identity is linked to His action in saving the people of Israel from Egypt. Francis Watson draws attention to the disclosure of God’s name in Exodus 3:14, in which “God is ‘the one who is’ (ὁ ὢν, LXX) as the agent who is the subject of a range of action verbs: in the theophany of the burning

¹⁵⁴The conjunction εἴπερ is used mainly by Paul in the NT (Rom 8:9, 17; 1 Cor 8:5; 15:15; a variant reading in 2 Cor 5:3), introduces the great Jewish confession of the oneness of God. See Jewett, *Romans*, 299.

¹⁵⁵Seifrid, “The Knowledge of the Creator,” 7. I am indebted to Dr. Mark Seifrid for his essay, “The Knowledge of the Creator and Experience of Exile: The Contours of Paul’s Theology,” and especially for the section that concerns Rom 3:29-30.

¹⁵⁶See C. J. Labuschagne, *The Incomparability of Yahweh in the Old Testament*, POS 5 (Leiden: Brill, 1966); R. W. L. Moberly, “How Appropriate Is ‘Monotheism’ as a Category for Biblical Interpretation?” in *Early Jewish and Christian Monotheism*, ed. L. T. Stuckenburck and W. North, JSNTSup 263 (London: T. & T. Clark, 2004), 216-34.

bush, God is said to call, to speak, to see, to hear, to know, to come down, to deliver, to lead forth, to bring in, and to send”¹⁵⁷ (see Exod 3:7-14). Similar characterization of God is connected to God’s saving action, in which He promises to Israel deliverance from Egypt: For instance, God is said to be as “I am the Lord”—repeated numerous times—I appeared to, I established, I have heard, I have remembered, I will bring, I will deliver, I will redeem, I will take, I will be, and I will give (see Exod 6:2-9). Even in the giving of the Ten Commandments, God’s identity is attached to His saving action on behalf of Israel: “Then God spoke all these words, saying, “I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me” (Exod 20:1-3). This characterization of God remained dominant among the Israelites even centuries later. There God is addressed as “‘O Lord our God,’ who brought your people out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and have made a name for yourself, as at this day, . . .” (Dan 9:15).

As a result, “the divine action that constitutes the Exodus establishes not just that God is ‘one,’ but that the one God is the God who is bringing the people of Israel out of Egypt into the Promised Land.”¹⁵⁸ *In this respect, Paul’s allusion to the Shema’ stands in continuity with it.*¹⁵⁹ As elsewhere, Paul portrays God in terms of God’s work in Christ—“who will justify (δικαιώσει) those who are circumcised by faith (ἐκ πίστεως) and those who are uncircumcised through faith” (διὰ τῆς πίστεως; 3:30; see also 3:21-26;

¹⁵⁷Watson, “The Triune Divine Identity,” 106.

¹⁵⁸Ibid.

¹⁵⁹Seifrid, “The Knowledge of the Creator,” 7 (author’s emphasis).

4:25).¹⁶⁰ In Paul's theo-logy, the action of God that characterizes the God of the Jews is no longer the Exodus (the act of delivering Israel out of Egypt) because it is replaced by God's saving action in Christ.¹⁶¹

Nonetheless, Paul's characterization of God with His action in Christ retains the fundamental Jewish notion of particularism, which finds its implication in Romans. It is the gospel of God that concerns God's Son, the seed of David according to the flesh (Rom 1:3; 9:5).¹⁶² It is through faith in Him that God's act of righteousness extends to everyone who believes, without distinction (3:22). If the gospel of justification by faith alone excludes all boasting, it eliminates all exclusivity and discrimination, as well. God is not *the God of Jews only*; *He is the God of gentiles also* (v. 29). *Since there is only one God*, who has only one way for justification, *He will justify the circumcised* (Jews) *by faith and the uncircumcised* (gentiles) *through faith* (v. 30).¹⁶³ Thus, God anticipates only one response to His offer of salvation—not works, but faith.

Moreover, Paul's characterization of God in Romans 3:30 implies that the distinction between Israel and the nations still remains, even though these distinctions are

¹⁶⁰The variation in preposition in Paul's description of faith—the Jews are saved *ἐκ πίστεως*, and the gentiles are saved *διὰ τῆς πίστεως*—has generated a great deal of debate among scholars. Most scholars now agree that the variation is stylistic and rhetorical. There is probably no difference in meaning. See Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 124; Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 222; Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 189; Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 252; Schreiner, *Romans*, 206. Contra Godet (*Commentary on Romans*, 165-66); Sanday and Headlam (*Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 96), and S. K. Stowers ("ΕΚ ΠΙΣΤΕΩΣ and ΔΙΑ ΠΙΣΤΕΩΣ in Romans 3:30," *JBL* 108 [1989], 665-74); Jewett (*Romans*, 301) and others recognize the two kinds of faith or different meaning, for the variation.

¹⁶¹It does not mean that Paul nullifies God's past action of Israel's deliverance; rather, he upholds it without reservation because Israel received the benefits at the Exodus (see Rom 9:4; cf. 1 Cor 10:1-13). See Seifrid, "The Knowledge of the Creator," 7; Watson, "The Triune Divine Identity," 106.

¹⁶²Seifrid, "The Knowledge of the Creator," 7-8.

¹⁶³Stott, *The Message of Romans*, 120.

transcended (cf. 1 Cor 7:18).¹⁶⁴ The following is John Stott's summary of this point:

This identical truth applies to all other distinctions, whether of race, nationality, class, sex or age. Not that all such distinctions are actually obliterated, for men remain men and women women, Jews are still circumcised and Gentiles uncircumcised, our skin pigmentation does not change, and we still have the same passport. But these continuing distinctions are rendered of no significant account. They neither affect our relationship with God, nor hinder our fellowship with one another. At the foot of Christ's cross and through faith in him, we are all on exactly the same level, indeed sisters and brothers in Christ.¹⁶⁵

This evidently demonstrates the line of continuity between Paul's use of the *Shema* ' and its biblical context, a continuity that is fundamental to his understanding of God. In addition, Paul recognizes the *Shema* ' as confirmed and fulfilled in the justification of the Jews and gentiles by faith alone.¹⁶⁶ Consequently, according to Paul's reading of the book of Deuteronomy (LXX) and its implication, Seifrid maintains,

[T]he book of Deuteronomy (LXX) looks forward to the salvation of the nations and the provocation of Israel's jealousy through them (Rom 10:19, LXX Deut 32:21; Rom 15:10, LXX Deut 32:43). Paul reads the *Shema* ' within the larger stream of biblical hope that pointed forward to the salvation of the nations, who would worship the one God of Israel. (See Isa 2:2-4; [Micah 4:1-4]; Isa 11:9-10; 42:1-4; 45:20-25; 49:6; Zech 14:9).¹⁶⁷

Paul has convincingly established that his characterization of God is based on the *Shema* ', that is, "God is one." God does not have two ways of justification, one for the Jews and one for the gentiles, because He is one God. The One God justifies both Jews and gentiles in one and the same way—without any distinction—in Christ's atoning work, through faith in Him. Therefore, this identity of God as the One God who justifies

¹⁶⁴Seifrid, "The Knowledge of the Creator," 8.

¹⁶⁵Stott, *The Message of Romans*, 120.

¹⁶⁶Seifrid, "The Knowledge of the Creator," 8.

¹⁶⁷Ibid.

both Jews and gentiles, signifying Paul's mission, is reaching all nations and peoples of the entire world.

God as the One Who Justifies the Ungodly (4:3-5)

Paul's earlier proclamation attests that no one can experience God's saving righteousness by maintaining the works of the law. This affirmation, based on the *Shema*, clearly shows that justification by faith is for all people—Jews and gentiles, circumcised and uncircumcised—without any discrimination. He immediately asserts that his gospel of faith does not abolish the Law, but establishes it (3:31),¹⁶⁸ which is a claim that he does not develop until Romans 7. At this point, Paul appeals to Abraham, showing that—by faith alone—Abraham was justified before God. “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness” repeated many times in chapter 4 (4:3, 5, 9, 13, 22).¹⁶⁹ Hence, the theme that ties Romans 4 together with 3:27-31 is that all human beings are justified by faith.¹⁷⁰ Paul distinguishes between law and promise (4:13-16), which was given to Abraham. Paul does not speak in the usual terms of “Jews and gentiles.” He refers to “circumcision and uncircumcision,” but downplays the significance of circumcision (4:9-12). Nevertheless, he defines it in relation to God's promise of “the salvation for all people”: that “you [Abraham] will become the father of many nations” (Gen 17:4-5). Paul sees in Genesis 15:4-6 a hope toward fulfillment of the

¹⁶⁸It is quite difficult to interpret this verse. For a different viewpoint and its meaning, see Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 252-55; Schreiner, *Romans*, 206-08; Osborne, *Romans*, 103-04.

¹⁶⁹For a survey of the role of Abraham in the NT see W. Baird, “Abraham in the New Testament: Tradition and New Identity,” *Int* 42 (1988): 63-77.

¹⁷⁰Anthony J. Guerra (“Romans 4 as Apologetic Theology,” *HTR* 81 [1988]: 251-70) holds that Paul provides an “apologetic theology” for the inclusion of the gentiles in Romans 4.

promise (see Rom 4:3, 18, 23).

Thus, Mark Seifrid considers that “for Paul, the Genesis narrative in which the Lord institutes circumcision links it ultimately to the promise, not to Law, in distinction from early Jewish tradition.”¹⁷¹ Paul connects his characterization of God—drawn from the Shema’—to his interpretation of the story of God’s dealings with Abraham.

Furthermore, Paul, while recounting the story of Abraham in Romans 4, brings to the surface three remarkable characterizations of God’s saving action, as Seifrid observes.¹⁷²

However, he is of opinion that interpreters of Romans pay less attention to “these characterizations that serve to ground Paul’s appeal to Israel’s confession in Romans 3:30.”¹⁷³ These characterizations of God will be discussed briefly in the order that they appear in the text: (1) God as the one who justifies the ungodly, (2) God as the one who gives life to the dead, and (3) God as the one who raised Jesus from the dead. Each identity of God will provide a strong support for the inclusion of the gentiles into the people of God and Paul’s mission to the nations.

In Romans 4:3-5, Paul writes,

For what does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness.” Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as a due. And to the one who does not work but believes in him *who [God] justifies the ungodly*, his faith is counted as righteousness (4:3-5).

God’s identity is viewed in these verses as the one who justifies the ungodly. This characterization of God appears in the context of Paul’s dealing with the comparison of

¹⁷¹Seifrid, “The Knowledge of the Creator,” 9.

¹⁷²Ibid.

¹⁷³Ibid., 10.

faith with works (4:1-8) by appealing to Abraham and David. In verses 1-2, Paul denies that Abraham is any exception to the principle that is laid down in 3:27-28: All boasting is dismissed because justification is by faith alone. Verse 3 cites the scriptural evidence for Abraham's justification by faith (Gen 15:6). This reckoning of Abraham's faith for righteousness is shown in verses 4-5 to be a gracious act of the "God who justifies the ungodly", thereby excluding any place for "works" in the process.

To demonstrate that Abraham's righteousness is not based on works, although they are valued by human beings,¹⁷⁴ but on faith, Paul appeals to the teaching of Scripture.¹⁷⁵ His argument (note the conjunction γὰρ, for) proceeds along the lines, "Does Abraham really perform any work for boasting before God?" Not at all, for "the Scripture says" it (v. 3). Through the singular use of Scripture (ἡ γραφή), Paul may be implying that the whole of Scripture is behind the centrality of faith over works.¹⁷⁶ Now if Abraham does not become righteous based on works, so that there is no occasion for him to boast, what is the basis for his relationship with God? Paul, citing the Scripture, says it is his "faith"—"Abraham believed (ἐπίστευσεν) God, and it was counted (or credited, ἐλογίσθη) to him as righteousness" (Gen 15:6; see also 15:22; Gal 3:6). His quotation from Genesis 15:6 corresponds substantially with Hebrew and LXX.¹⁷⁷ This Scripture proves the failure of works to declare Abraham righteous and the absolute need of faith.

¹⁷⁴Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 260.

¹⁷⁵See notes 39 and 40 for Paul's Scripture usage. This singular use of Scripture points to Scripture as a whole, not to the individual passage. See Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 106.

¹⁷⁶Osborne, *Romans*, 107.

¹⁷⁷See Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 196, especially n. 12; Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 261, n. 30.

Indeed, his faith is his complete trust in God with reference to God's promise that he would have a natural heir to his offspring. As time passes by, he sees no prospect of having his own heir. God assures him again regarding His promise in Genesis 15:1-5. This promise is a renewal of the one that God already made to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3, which includes the blessing promised to all the peoples of the entire world.¹⁷⁸ Abraham, however, believes God's promise, trusting in Him that He will fulfill it. This is the basis on which God pronounced him righteous. For this reason, Abraham becomes the representative of this "faith" for all the people of the earth, which is fulfilled in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Therefore, Abraham's "faith" is reckoned to him as righteousness, which is of considerable significance for Paul's use of the text in this chapter, as well as his mission to the entire world.

Contemporary Jews, during Paul's day, comprehended Genesis 15:6 differently. Abraham's "faithfulness" in performing God's commands is the implication of "faith reckoned for righteousness." Consequently, his faith includes the idea of meritorious work.¹⁷⁹ This has diminished the centrality of faith as a response to God's offer of saving righteousness. The sentence construction could suggest that "faith" and "righteousness" are the same, and perhaps God considers Abraham's faith as itself a "righteous act," well-pleasing to Him to declare him as righteous. The notion, though, does not explicitly speak of Abraham's faith as a merit or as a righteous act.¹⁸⁰ Instead it

¹⁷⁸For a detailed discussion with respect to the significance of the Abrahamic promise, see W. C. Kaiser Jr., *Toward an Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978); see especially 91-92.

¹⁷⁹Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 196; Schreiner, *Romans*, 216-17.

¹⁸⁰For a meaningful conversation about this issue, see J. A. Ziesler, *The Meaning of Righteousness in Paul: A Linguistic and Theological Enquiry*, SNTSMS 20 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 181-85; O. Palmer Robertson, "Genesis 15:6: New Covenant Expositions of an

is a gift from God, something that did not naturally belong to him. That it was credited (λογίζομαι) to his account apart from any works is evident in verses 4-5.¹⁸¹

Paul proceeds to contrast works and faith, noting that one who works receives a wage. Such a wage is owed as a debt or an obligation (ὀφείλημα)—not freely given—to the person who works. In other words, one’s wage is not credited (λογίζομαι) as a gift, but as an obligation (v. 4; literally, not according to grace (χάρις), but according to debt (ὀφείλημα). On the other hand, faith involves depending on another, or just simply receiving a gift for which the person does not work.¹⁸² As a result, an individual who does not work (and yet receives wages), but trusts God—who justifies the ungodly—has his faith credited as righteousness (v. 5). This cancels any erroneous view that one may have about v. 4. The passive verb “credited” is a divine passive meaning that God credits the blessings of His saving action only in Christ’s atoning work on the cross.¹⁸³

Hence, Paul appeals to David in verses 6-8, introducing him by employing καθάπερ, meaning “just as.” David is justified apart from works like Abraham. Comparing Abraham to David is quite helpful. According to Alan F. Johnson, although Abraham lived prior to the law, David was squarely under it. David, unlike Abraham (who was a gentile and an idol worshiper prior to God’s call), was a flagrant violator of

Old Testament Text,” *WTJ* 42 (1980): 265-66. See also Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 111; Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 260-62.

¹⁸¹Paul’s use of the verb λογίζομαι (meaning “credited,” “reckoned,” or “counted”) from the financial or business world is quite important, which plays a major role in this chapter (e.g., vv. 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 22, 23, and 24). See Stott, *The Message of Romans*, 125; Schreiner, *Romans*, 215.

¹⁸²Schreiner, *Romans*, 215.

¹⁸³Osborne, *Romans*, 108.

God's law, yet God forgave him.¹⁸⁴ The reckoning of righteousness apart from works thus represents the forgiveness of sins.¹⁸⁵ Paul once again connects with the OT text, from Psalm 32:1-2, to illustrate that God's blessing is offered apart from any works. The blessing is a free forgiveness of sin, and does not "credit" (λογίζομαι) a person with sin or "count" one as a sinner. The word λογίζομαι connects these two OT texts, in that a believer is credited as righteous, or not counted as a sinner, apart from any meritorious works. Therefore, righteousness and forgiveness are free gifts from God who justifies the ungodly.

The phrase, "God who justifies the ungodly," is a magnificent one,¹⁸⁶ and the Greek word ἀσεβής (meaning "wicked" or "ungodly") is a strong term.¹⁸⁷ By the use of this word, Paul emphasizes that justification is entirely without any merit, because God's saving activity is purely, and completely free from any works. He justifies the ungodly, even those acts opposed to Him. The same God declares, "I will not acquit the guilty" (Exod 23:7; LXX has "Thou shall not justify the ungodly," making it a command). The OT judge is commanded to "justify the righteous, and condemn the wicked" (Deut 25:1). When Solomon dedicated the temple, in his prayer, he asked God to condemn the wicked and justify the righteous (1 Kings 8:31-32). Furthermore, the OT forbids people from justifying the wicked (Prov 17:15; 24:24; Isa 5:23). Thus, according to OT teaching, the godly, or the pious, should be justified.

¹⁸⁴Johnson, *Romans*, 83.

¹⁸⁵Seifrid, *Christ, Our Righteousness*, 68.

¹⁸⁶Ibid., 109.

¹⁸⁷Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 198.

Portraying God as justifying the ungodly, Paul, though, is not encouraging here ungodliness or wickedness. God does not merely justify individuals apart from works, but He does so contrary to what they deserve.¹⁸⁸ The OT text refers to an existing situation. Paul, however, applies a new meaning to the word “justify,” signifying a creative act of God, whereby a person with faith in Him is provided with a new status.¹⁸⁹ The text, in fact, “implicitly places Abraham among the ungodly.”¹⁹⁰ Abraham himself was an uncircumcised gentile and an idol worshiper before God called him and gave him the promise. It was counted to Abraham as righteousness when he simply responded in faith and believed God. He justifies the ungodly. The text is not designating Abraham as the sinner par excellence, but rather pointing to the universal human predicament, wherein all are desperately in need of justification, even including Abraham.¹⁹¹ The problem of the ungodly is a universal problem. Consequently, this characterization implies an exclusive rule: God justifies *only* the ungodly¹⁹² because all have sinned (3:23) and require God’s forgiveness and His righteousness, which God offers to all through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is purely a matter of grace and unmerited favor, apart from works as its basis. Hence, justifying the ungodly is another saving action of God, which gives Paul a reason for taking his mission to the nations.

¹⁸⁸F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans: An Introduction and Commentary*, 5th ed., TNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), 115.

¹⁸⁹Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 264.

¹⁹⁰Schreiner, *Romans*, 214.

¹⁹¹Everett E. Harrison and Donald A. Hagner, *Romans—Galatians*, vol. 11, in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Temper Longman and David E. Garland (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 78.

¹⁹²Seifrid, *Christ, Our Righteousness*, 68.

God as the One Who Gives Life to the Dead (4:16-17)

Paul sees greater implications of God's power of his saving action for human beings in the following verses. In his subsequent account, Paul identifies God as the one "who gives life to the dead and calls into being that which has no being" (4:17). This characterization of God means that He is the Creator and the Giver of life. Once again, this identification of God arises from the promise to Abraham that "as it is written, 'I have made you the father of many nations'¹⁹³—in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist" (4:17; Gen 17:5). In this characterization of God is the visible expression of the justification of the ungodly¹⁹⁴ because Abraham was justified when he was ungodly. In other words, Abraham was declared righteous when he was in the state of uncircumcision. Consequently, faith justified him, not circumcision (4:9-12). Abraham was justified before the law was given, as well. He was justified by grace, not by law (4:13-17).

To bolster his point, Paul turns to the "promise" of Abraham, which is the key word in this section. Abraham was justified by believing God's promise, not by obeying God's law. Abraham's promise was given purely through God's grace. God justifies the ungodly because they believe in His gracious promise, not because they obey His law. The law was not given to save human beings, but to show that they need to be saved

¹⁹³Though majority commentators prefer "nations" over "gentiles" for the Greek word *ἔθνη*, but some have argued for "Gentiles." For example, Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 121; Dunn, *Romans* 1-8, 217. See also Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 386. He translates with "nations" but states that Paul understands "many nations" as a term for Gentiles in general.

¹⁹⁴Seifrid, "The Knowledge of the Creator," 10.

(4:15). The Abrahamic promise, however, is expressed in the gift of offspring and becoming *heir of the world* (τὸ κληρονόμον . . . κόσμου, v. 13).¹⁹⁵ Specifically, Abraham was promised that he would have descendants (Gen 12:2; 13:16; 15:5; 17:5-6), be a source of blessing to the nations (Gen 12:3; 18:18; 22:18), and inherit the Promised Land (Gen 12:7; 13:15; 15:7; 17:8), as well. This promise (v. 13) is a summary of these blessings from the standpoint of the universal effects of the coming of the Christ. Abraham and his offspring would inherit the world through the death and resurrection of Jesus.¹⁹⁶

The fact that Abraham is justified by grace and not law proves that salvation is meant for all human beings. Hence, Paul sees the implication of this truth in Abraham's promise that he would become not only the *heir of the world*, but in addition *the father of all* (πατὴρ πάντων)—both Jews (those of the law) and gentiles (those of the faith)—who come by the way of faith (ἐκ πίστεως, Rom 4:16; cf. Gal 3:7, 29). This promise clearly indicates Abraham's universal fatherhood, which Paul reinforces in the following verse by appealing to the Scripture. His quotation is from Genesis 17:5: "I have made you the father of many nations" (v. 5, quoting from LXX). By this, Paul once again stresses that Abraham is the father of both Jews and gentiles. Paul may be referring to Abraham's natural offspring (cf. Gen 17:6, "I will make you very fruitful"), but he would be the spiritual father over Jewish and gentile nations,¹⁹⁷ or the many nations from which

¹⁹⁵Ibid.

¹⁹⁶Osborne, *Romans*, 113.

¹⁹⁷Ibid., 117.

Abraham's spiritual offspring would come.¹⁹⁸ As Joseph Fitzmyer states, the "many nations" are "all those who become believers in Christ, who are reckoned as upright through faith."¹⁹⁹

In fact, Paul designates Abraham as *our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed*. He goes on to characterize God, in whom Abraham believed, in terms of His activity. First of all, He is *the God who gives life to the dead*. Paul may have in mind the Jewish view of the spiritual condition of the gentiles—who are spiritually dead—but God is the God who gives life to the dead. The "dead" is a general term that entails both the physically dead and the spiritually dead. The subsequent verses, however, refer to Abraham and Sarah in terms of death (see v. 19 below). Through the word of promise, God—who gives life to the dead—infuses life into Sarah's "dead" womb and Abraham's "dead" seed and, with God's creative power,²⁰⁰ produces new life.²⁰¹ So God calls forth believers from the death of sin and provides them with new life. Second, God is the one who *calls into being that which has no being* (καλοῦντος τὰ μὴ ὄντα ὡς ὄντα). The interpreters of Romans are divided in understanding the meaning of the phrase.²⁰² According to one interpretation, this phrase applies to God's creative activity, by which He created the world out of nothing.²⁰³ God *calls what did not exist so that* (ὡς taken as a

¹⁹⁸Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 208.

¹⁹⁹Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 386.

²⁰⁰Such creative power of God is often referred to in Jewish tradition. See Tob 13:2; Wis 16:13; 2 Macc 7:28; 2 Bar 21:4; 2 Enoch 24:2.

²⁰¹Edwards, *Romans* 129.

²⁰²For details, see Schreiner, *Romans*, 236-39.

²⁰³Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 1:244; Dunn, *Romans*, 1-8, 218.

result clause) *it came into existence*. Thus, Abraham believed in the God who raises the dead and created the world out of nothing. In a natural sense, though, it means God calling that which does not yet exist as if it does. This interpretation fits better into this context because it signifies God's promise to call nations and the offspring of Abraham where none existed.²⁰⁴ Schreiner stresses that "Paul is interested not so much in the past creative work of God as in faith in God's future work to produce a worldwide family for Abraham."²⁰⁵ At the same time, we need to acknowledge that the later cannot be there without the former. Only God has the power to fulfill what He promised to Abraham for God is the one who "is able to effect what He has promised" (4:21). Abraham not only believed this promise of God but he "gave glory to God" (4:20; contrary to those who suppress the truth about God, see 1:21-23). Therefore, by this characterization of God, Paul aims to summon all the nations to Him by sharing Abraham's faith, which becomes his foundation for global mission.

God as the One Who Raised Jesus from the Dead (4:23-25)

Paul takes his characterization of God to its climax through God's saving action in Jesus Christ. He writes, "But the words 'it was counted to him' were not written for his sake alone, but for ours also. It will be counted to us who believe in him *who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord*, who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification" (4:23-25).

Paul's identification of God in Romans 4 is not only the "One who justifies the

²⁰⁴Sanday and Headlam, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 113; Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 146-47; Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 281-82; Schreiner, *Romans*, 237.

²⁰⁵Schreiner, *Romans*, 237.

ungodly” (4:5), and the “One who raises the dead and calls into being that which has no being” (4:17), but also the “*One who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord*” (4:24). There is a logical shift from God’s justification of the ungodly, to God’s raising the dead, to God’s raising Jesus from the dead. Paul considers this act of God in Christ to be the climax and the finality of God’s identity. It is the foundation of his theo-logy and his mission to the nations. In these verses are found the application of Abraham’s story from Genesis 15:6, to which Paul has been referring in Romans 4:3-22. Abraham’s faith was important for his immediate circle; however, the words “were not written for him alone.” The words were not limited to Abraham; they are relevant to all believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. When believers place their faith in God’s promises, which the death and resurrection of Jesus have fulfilled, they are applying the dynamic faith of Abraham. Righteousness will be reckoned to the believers in the same way that it was to Abraham.

Paul has demonstrated from the OT that Abraham was promised to be *the father of many nations*, and he has expounded that the universal blessing promised to Abraham entails the inclusion of the gentiles. They are all heirs of Abraham’s promise, sharing his faith that God gives life to the dead. This is fully realized in Christ’s death and the resurrection.²⁰⁶ Just as Abraham believed in God, who raised the dead (4:17, 19), Christian believers put their faith in “God who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord” (4:24). God’s act of raising Jesus “for us” (δι’ ἡμᾶς) opens the way for us to believe in this God. In light of God’s act of raising Jesus, Paul can understand that the God of Abraham is the God *who raises the dead and calls into being that which has no being*

²⁰⁶The resurrection of Jesus was a common statement of faith in the early church. See Acts 3:15; 13:30; Rom 1:3-4; 7:4; 10:9; 1 Cor 15:4-7, 11-12, 20; Gal 1:1; Eph 1:20; Col 2:12; 1 Thess 1:10; 1 Pet 1:21.

(4:17). In other words, the same God who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead made alive the ‘dead’ body of Abraham to make universal fatherhood possible.

Likewise, Paul regards God’s action of raising the dead body of Jesus to eternal life, as being for the sake of the justification of the ungodly (4:5, 25; note “for our trespasses and raised for our justification”). C. K. Barrett observes that many interpreters of Romans miss the typological relationship between the objects of Abraham’s faith and of God raising Jesus from the dead: “That which the Old Testament foreshadowed has become manifest in the death and resurrection of Jesus, in which God raised up his own Son not from the dead womb but from the grave.”²⁰⁷ Paul, writing to the Corinthians, affirms that the raising of Jesus takes place ‘according to the Scriptures’ (1 Cor 15:4).²⁰⁸ This plainly indicates that the resurrection of Jesus has continuity with the Scripture.

Paul’s characterization of God as the One who raised Jesus from the dead is naturally connected to Christ’s death in 4:25: who was delivered up (παρεδόθη) because of our trespasses, and was raised up in the interest of our justification. Consequently, Paul’s God is the one who raised Jesus from the dead, but this God is also the one who *delivered Jesus up because of our trespasses* (ὅς παρεδόθη διὰ τὰ παραπτώματα ἡμῶν).²⁰⁹ This is clearly an allusion to Isaiah 53, which presents the Servant of the Lord suffering

²⁰⁷C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, HNTC (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1957), 99.

²⁰⁸God’s characterization with reference to the raising of Christ is not confined to Romans. The language of Romans in 4:25 and 8:11 has close parallels, and it was a common statement of faith in the early church. See Acts 3:15; 4:10; 13:30; Rom 1:3-4; 7:4; 10:9; 1 Cor 15:4-7, 11-12, 20; 2 Cor 1:9; 4:14; Gal 1:1; Eph 1:20; Col 2:12; 1 Thess 1:10; 1 Pet 1:21.

²⁰⁹The statement’s creedal character leads some to think that it is a pre-Pauline formula. See W. Kramer, *Christ, Lord, and the Son of God* (London: SCM, 1966), 116.

for the sins of Israel.²¹⁰ The Servant was “because of their sins delivered up” (διὰ τὰς ἁμαρτίας αὐτῶν παρεδόθη, Isa 53:12; cf. 53:5, 10-11). Paul does not explain who “delivered Jesus up” but, in Romans 8:32, he makes it clear that God delivered Jesus up for all. Paul’s identification of God in the atoning death of Christ in Romans 8:32 has an additional act of God, which reads that “*he* [God] who “did not spare” His own Son, but “delivered him up” for us all.” Paul’s use of the twin action of “not sparing” (οὐκ ἐφείσατο) His Son²¹¹ and “delivering him up” (παρεδόθη) describe God’s single action of making Christ’s atoning death more emphatic. This describes Paul’s God—who did not spare His own Son, but handed Him over for all. He is also the God who raised Jesus from the dead.

The atoning death and resurrection of Jesus are the two sides of the single, yet complex, action in which God defines who God is, remarks Watson.²¹² Christ’s cross and resurrection of Jesus are inseparable from each other.²¹³ God not only gave Jesus over to death for (διὰ) our sins, but He also raised Him on account of (διὰ) our justification.²¹⁴

²¹⁰Many concur that this verse alludes to Isaiah 53. See Cranfield, *The Commentary on Romans*, 1: 251; Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 288; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 389; Stuhlmacher, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans*, 139.

²¹¹Paul’s language reflects Genesis 22:16. As Abraham did not spare his beloved son (οὐκ ἐφείσω τοῦ υἱοῦ σου τοῦ ἀγαπητοῦ), so it is with God (ὅς γε τοῦ ἰδίου υἱοῦ οὐκ ἐφείσατο). Abraham is not explicitly mentioned in Romans 8:32, however, and the sacrifice of Isaac did not have expiatory significance. It is probably appropriate to find a formal typological correspondence between his action and God’s, rather than scriptural language. Cf. Schreiner, *Romans*, 459; Watson, “The Triune Divine Identity,” 107-08.

²¹²Watson, “The Triune Divine Identity,” 107.

²¹³B. McNeil, “Raised for our Justification,” *ITQ* 42 (1975): 97-105.

²¹⁴The first διὰ is causal. There is no disagreement among the scholars about it, but they are divided with regard to the second διὰ. For various options, see Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 215-16; Schreiner, *Romans*, 243-44; Osborne, *Romans*, 122-23.

Because both phrases are parallel, the causal force is a more likely option for the second $\delta\iota\alpha$ as well, and this makes good sense of the phrase. Hence, Jesus was raised because of our justification—to say that His resurrection validates and proves that our justification has been secured.²¹⁵ Thus, God’s acts in Christ’s death and resurrection, fulfill the promise of universal blessing made to Abraham (Gen 12:1-3; 15:6; 17:5). Christ’s atoning death and His resurrection are the means by which all peoples enter the new people of God.

These acts of God in Jesus portray the gospel of God for which Paul was called to preach to the nations. This is the gospel in which the promise is fulfilled. The nations will come to know the one and only true God through its proclamation and everyone will enter into His relationship by faith. Paul’s identification of God in His saving activities provides the evidence that there is only one God, and there is only one way to come to Him. As a result, faith in the one God is faith in this one and unique God, who justifies everyone in Christ’s death and resurrection. In the words of J. L. Martyn, “This one God has now identified himself by his act in Jesus Christ, making that act, the primal mark of his identity.”²¹⁶

Summary and Conclusion

God is central to Paul’s theo-logy. He employs numerous statements and languages pertaining to God’s character, His acts, and His purposes, which are always connected with his own conviction about Christ and His redemptive work for all people.

²¹⁵Murray J. Harris, *NIDNTT*, 3:1184; Schreiner, *Romans*, 244.

²¹⁶J. L. Martyn, *Galatians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 85.

Paul utilizes numerous explicit God-languages that include his use of *θεός*. Another feature of God-language is his use of “descriptive statements” concerning God in participle clauses and relative clauses, which clearly refer to God. Paul uses “divine passives,” as well, implying the action of God. For Paul, God’s true identity is bound by “the action of God” on behalf of His people. God’s being and His acts are closely tied together from the creation of the world. The question who God is can best be explained by reference to what God does. Paul explicates the identification of God through statements of “what God does” in a remarkable way. This characterization of God in God’s action is a unique feature, which is distinctively Christian and separates Christianity from all other world religions.

In Romans, God’s action plays a significant role in the manifestation of the identity of God. The characterization of God through His acts is not Paul’s invention. It reverts to OT promises, particularly those that are associated with the Exodus and Abraham’s stories, in which Paul finds the fulfillment of God’s action in Christ’s atoning work. He stresses that both Jews and gentiles are sinners, and God judges everyone impartially. Jews do not have any advantage over gentiles for having the law or performing works of the law. Thus, all people need salvation, which is available through God’s action in Christ’s work. The work of Jesus defined the gospel and is revealed in the righteousness of God. Paul demonstrates the purpose of God’s promises in Scriptures. His promises to Abraham were for the gentiles’ inclusion in the people of God without any distinction, apart from work, apart from the works of the law, and apart from circumcision. Jews and gentiles are justified by faith alone. Justification by faith excludes any possibility of boasting, and can take place only through faith—not by observing the

law.

Paul emphasizes the Jewish concept of the “oneness” of God, known as *Shema*, which teaches that “God is one.” Therefore, God is the God of the Jews, along with the gentiles. The one God of the Jews is the God of the whole world, including the gentiles. God does not possess two ways of justification—one for the Jews and one for the gentiles—because He is one God. The One God justifies both Jews and gentiles in one and the same way by Christ’s atoning work, and through faith in Him. Hence, the *Shema* clearly shows that the justification by faith is for all people, both Jews and gentiles, circumcised and uncircumcised, without any discrimination. This identity of God as the One God, who justifies both Jews and gentiles, signifies that Paul’s mission is reaching all nations and peoples of the entire world.

This One God, who justifies the Jews and the gentiles, is the same God who justifies the ungodly. Moreover, He is the God who gives life to the dead—the description by which Paul characterizes the same God “who raised Jesus from the dead.” God’s acts in Christ’s death and resurrection fulfilled the promise of universal blessing made to Abraham (Gen 12:1-3; 15:6; 17:5). These acts of God in Christ portray the gospel of God, for which Paul was called to preach to the nations. This is the gospel in which the promise of God is fulfilled, and by its proclamation the nations will come to know the One and only true God; everyone will enter into His relationship by faith. Consequently, Paul’s identification of God in His saving activities provides the evidence that there is only One God, and just one way to come to Him. When Paul contemplated on his mission to the nations, he approached the issue *theo-logically*, by characterizing God in His saving actions accomplished through Christ’s cross and resurrection. Paul

received a unique understanding of the implications of God's promises to Abraham and His acts in Christ for the inclusion of the gentiles into the people of God. Hence, the identification of God in His saving activity, by the redemptive work of Jesus, forms the basic foundation for Paul's worldwide mission in Romans.

CHAPTER 4

THE MISSIONARY TASK: PAUL’S MISSION AS
PREACHING THE GOSPEL OF GOD
TO ALL THE NATIONS

Introduction

Paul had a missionary purpose in mind when he wrote the letter to the Romans. His desire is proclaiming the gospel to all the nations and bringing about their obedience of faith in God, who is the foundation for his global mission. An important objective in this inquiry is determining distinctive features of Paul’s missionary task in preaching the gospel and reaching the nations worldwide. Paul clearly says that he was basically a missionary to the nations. According to Nils A. Dahl, Paul had been “acclaimed as the first Christian theologian and as the greatest Christian missionary of all time.”¹ He was called as an apostle for the sake of the gospel (Rom 1:1). He speaks of himself as “apostle to the ἔθνη” (gentiles/nations, Rom 11:13; Gal 2:8-9; Rom 15:16, 18). Paul understands his primary task as an apostle to the gentiles, who has been called and sent by God to preach the gospel.

The gospel that Paul was called to proclaim, which he elaborated on in Romans 1-8, is God’s power unto salvation to the Jews first and to the Greeks as well (Rom 1:16), signifying all peoples of the entire world. Paul devoted the major part of his

¹Nils A. Dahl, “The Missionary Theology in the Epistle to the Romans,” in *Studies in Paul: Theology for the Early Christian Mission* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1977), 70. See also David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shift in Theology of Mission* (New York: Orbis, 1991), 124.

life to preaching the gospel and planting new churches where the name of Christ has never been heard (Rom 15:20), especially among the gentiles. According to Arland J.

Hultgren,

Paul's gospel is essentially a "gentile" gospel in that it proclaims salvation in Christ apart from the law. Although he did not draw back from preaching to the Jews (cf. 1 Cor 9:20), Paul proclaimed the saving message of the gospel apart from the requirement of circumcision and consequent observation of the law on the part of the gentiles. It means that his gospel had a "gentile principle" and orientation from the outset.²

In addition, Paul accomplished his mission among the gentiles. Hence, Paul's description of his missionary task focuses on two primary goals: (1) preaching the gospel of God, and (2) reaching all the nations.

Paul's Mission as Preaching 'the Gospel of God'

Paul's missionary task concentrates on preaching the gospel as his chief objective. In the opening verses of Romans 1, he provides his own classical formulation for the main purpose of his missionary calling: "Paul, a slave of Christ Jesus, called *to be* an apostle, set apart for *the gospel of God*" (Rom 1:1). He identifies his missionary task as that of an apostle, which indicates that Paul has been called and sent by God to preach the gospel. What is this gospel that he was called to preach? What role does the Scripture play in its origin? What is the message or the content of the gospel according to Paul? What is the goal of Paul's preaching the gospel? How does he understand the gospel in the context of his mission and missionary calling? What place does gospel preaching have in his mission to the nations? What is the scope of the gospel? What is the

²Arland J. Hultgren, *Paul's Gospel and Mission: The Outlook from His Letter to the Romans* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 125-26.

significance of the gospel proclamation for Paul in his mission to the nations?

The Theme of the Gospel and Its Origin

Paul begins his letter to the Romans with the phrase that he is “set apart for the gospel of God.” He sums up his message to the Roman church in the word “gospel” (εὐαγγέλιον). It refers to “the message of God’s saving work in Jesus Christ” for the sins of the whole world. Of the 76 occurrences of the singular noun εὐαγγέλιον³ in the NT, Paul employs it 60 times, while he uses the verb εὐαγγελίζομαι (to announce the good news) 21 times out of 54 occurrences in the NT.⁴ This statistical information demonstrates that the term is one of the most significant and central features in Paul’s theological vocabulary, which he has already indicated in the setting out of his missionary calling in Romans. Moo observes that “the main body of Romans is a treatise on Paul’s gospel, bracketed by an epistolary opening (1:1-17) and conclusion (15:14-16:27).”⁵

As a result of this massive NT occurrence of the word εὐαγγέλιον, Beker ascribes its usage to Paul.⁶ Originally, the noun εὐαγγέλιον was utilized in a purely secular sense both in the Hebrew Bible and the LXX, however, signifying “good news,”

³The term εὐαγγέλιον is an adjective used as a noun, which is derived from εὐαγγέλιος.

⁴For details, see Peter Stuhlmacher, “The Pauline Gospel,” in *The Gospel and the Gospels* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 149; cf. Joseph A. Fitzmyer, “The Gospel in the Theology of Paul,” in *Interpreting the Gospels*, ed. J. L. Mays (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981), 2-3. Paul additionally employs the compound verb προεὐαγγελίζομαι (to announce the good news beforehand, Gal 3:8) once, and the noun εὐαγγελιστής (evangelist, Eph 4:11; 2 Tim 4:5) twice in his letters.

⁵Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 39.

⁶J. C. Beker, *Paul the Apostle: The Triumph of God in Life and Thought* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), 110.

or “message of victory” (2 Sam 18:20, 25, 26; 2 Kgs 7:9), “the reward for good news,” or “compensation for a message of victory” (2 Sam 4:10; 18:22).⁷ In the LXX, it appears only in the plural form as εὐαγγελία in the sense of “reward for good news” (2 Kgdms 4:10), and in the feminine εὐαγγελία (2 Kgdms 18:20-27) as well.⁸ But it is chiefly in the contemporary Greek-Hellenistic language of the “imperial cult” εὐαγγέλιον (in plural) that it becomes an important religious word, signifying emperor as the “savior” (σωτήρ).⁹ Many scholars, therefore, maintain in the history of research that this is the linguistic resource of Pauline usage.¹⁰

Despite considerable Greek-Hellenistic evidence, there are differences in the content in the Christian use of the word εὐαγγέλιον.¹¹ Especially in Christian usage, the word is found to be only in the singular, emphasizing the once-for-all relevance of Christ’s death and resurrection.¹² While the noun is important only in the secular usage,

⁷See details in G. Friedrich, “εὐαγγελίζομαι, κτλ.,” *TDNT* 2: 707; G. Strecker, “εὐαγγέλιον,” *EDNT* 2: 71; U. Becker, “Gospel,” *NIDNTT* 2: 108.

⁸Friedrich, *TDNT* 2: 725.

⁹The emperor is a divine ruler, who controls nature, works miracles, and heals peoples. He appears on earth as deity in human form, and serves as a protective god, and brings good fortunes. The first εὐαγγέλιον is news of his birth, and also his enthronement was “good news.” This indicates that salvific meaning is associated with εὐαγγελία. See details in Adolf Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East: The New Testament Illustrated by Recently Discovered Texts of the Graeco-Roman World*, trans. L. R. M. Strachan (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1927), 366-71; W. Schneemelcher, “Introduction: Gospel,” in *New Testament Apocrypha*, ed. E. Hennecke and W. Schneemelcher, trans. R. M. Wilson, vol. 1 (London: Lutterworth Press, 1965), 71-75; Strecker, *EDNT* 2: 71.

¹⁰Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East*, 371; Schneemelcher, “Gospel,” 73; Strecker, *EDNT* 2: 79-80.

¹¹See Becker, “Gospel,” 2: 109; Friedrich, *TDNT* 2: 705-06; Fitzmyer, “Gospel in the Theology,” 12-13; L. Goppelt, “Gospel in Paul,” in *Theology of the New Testament*, trans. John Alsup, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 111; M. Burrows, “The Origin of the Term Gospel,” *JBL* 44 (1925): 21-33.

¹²Eduard Lohse, “Εὐαγγέλιον θεοῦ: Paul’s Interpretation of the Gospel in His Epistle to the Romans,” *Bib* 76 (1995): 129.

the verb is rare and insignificant.¹³ Consequently, dependence of the Pauline usage on that in the contemporary emperor cult is, indeed, simply not that evident.

It is the Hebrew verb בִּשַׁר (bissar) and its corresponding participle noun מְבַשֵּׂר (m^ebassēr), meaning “messenger,” from which LXX renders its Greek equivalent εὐαγγελίζομαι and εὐαγγελίζοντος in Isaiah (e.g., Isa 40:9; 41:27; 52:7; 60:6; 61:1);¹⁴ and the literature influenced by it in the OT (e.g., Ps 40[39]:10; 68[67]:11; 96[95]:2; Nahum 1:15); and in the latter Judaism (e.g., Ps Sol 11:1; 1QH 18:14), which makes a significant contribution to the understanding of the NT, particularly the Pauline use of εὐαγγέλιον.¹⁵ The verb is implemented to proclaim Yahweh’s universal victory over the world and his kingly rule. A new era starts with his accession (Ps 96) and with his return to Zion (in Isaiah).

Hebrew מְבַשֵּׂר (m^ebassēr)¹⁶ is of great significance in this connection because the messenger (מְבַשֵּׂר, m^ebassēr) of good tidings announces this new era of God’s royal

¹³J. W. Bowman [“The Term Gospel and Its Cognates in Palestinian Syriac,” in *New Testament Essays: Studies in Memory of T. W. Manson*, ed. J. B. Higgins (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1959), 56-57] has observed that “the use of the verb, by contrast, including that to be found in secular literature, even in the LXX and in Philo and Josephus, makes no significant contribution from a religious point of view, nor does the Greek verb εὐαγγελίζεσθαι ever attain to the wealth of religious meaning of its Hebrew equivalent.” Cf. Friedrich, *TDNT* 2: 110-14.

¹⁴Some scholars think that the book of Isaiah was not the work of one author. Thus, according to some scholars think that chapters 40-66 must have been written during the Exile and restoration periods and, thus, be the work of the second Isaiah, known as the Deutero-Isaiah. The majority of the critical scholars accept this theory. Very few scholars suggest that a third body of material, constituted from chapters 56-66, was written by the third Isaiah, or the Trito-Isaiah after returning from the Exile. While these theories seem very attractive, however, the book must be read as a whole written by one author as it has been handed down to the readers.

¹⁵Friedrich, *TDNT* 2: 708-09. See also Goppelt, “Gospel in Paul,” 110-11; Becker, “Gospel,” 2: 109.

¹⁶The Hebrew participle noun מְבַשֵּׂר (m^ebassēr) translated in Greek by the singular noun εὐαγγέλιον in the LXX, denotes “a messenger of good tidings” (Isa 40:9), especially of peace (Isa 52:7); and of victory (1 Sam 31:9; Ps 68:11). See BDB, 143; cf. Friedrich, *TDNT* 2: 709-10.

dominion, and inaugurates it by His mighty word, “peace” (εἰρήνη). “Salvation” (σωτηρία) has come now; Yahweh has become King (Isa 52:7; cf. 40:9); His reign extends over the whole world (Ps 96:2-3). The act of proclamation is itself the dawn of the new era. With the arrival of the messenger of the good news on the scene and the delivery of the message, salvation, redemption, and peace become a reality. The eschatological expectation; the proclamation of the βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ; the introduction of the gentiles into salvation history; the rejection of the ordinary religion of cult and law (Ps 40); and the link with the terms δικαιοσύνη (Ps 40:9), σωτηρία (Isa 52:7; Ps 95:1), and εἰρήνη (Isa 52:7)—all point to the NT.

The noun does not merely denote a specific content of εὐαγγέλιον, but it additionally expresses the act of proclamation.¹⁷ This twofold significance of Paul’s earliest epistles is very clear (1 Thess 1:5; Rom 1:9; 1 Thess 2:8; Rom 10:16; 11:28). Moreover, Paul himself points it to the OT when he quotes in Rom 10:15, what is stated in Isaiah (Isa 52:7): “How beautiful are the feet of those ‘who preach good news’” (τῶν εὐαγγελιζομένων). In the following verse (Rom 10:16), he calls this preaching the good news “the gospel” (τὸ εὐαγγέλιον). God himself speaks in the mouth of his messengers, and the new age begins through his divine proclamation. In his letter, Paul, thus, underlines the profound relevance of this task. It was given to him by emphasizing the gospel’s highly authoritative nature, which is God’s own εὐαγγέλιον, “promised beforehand through his [God’s] prophets in the holy Scriptures” (Rom 1:2).

¹⁷Goppelt, “Gospel in Paul,” 112; Peter T. O’Brien, *Gospel and Mission in the Writings of Paul: An Exegetical and Theological Analysis* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995), 81; Lohse, “εὐαγγέλιον θεοῦ,” 130. It is most unusual in Greek that εὐαγγέλιον is used for an action; see Friedrich, *TDNT* 2: 726.

The term is not the apostle Paul's invention, though. He is, in fact, making use of terminology that is common to Christians of that early period. The Christian utilization of the term is derived from Jesus himself, who appropriates this OT usage and introduces it into the Christian vocabulary through the sayings in Matthew 11:2-6, drawing on Isaiah 61:1-2.¹⁸ Jesus understood His own ministry of preaching and healing as fulfillment of the role of the מְבַשֵּׁר (m^ebassēr) of Isaiah, announcing the arrival of peace and salvation with the coming of God himself. Luke records that Jesus' reading of the OT Scripture in the synagogue of Nazareth is from Isaiah 61:1-2 (Luke 4:18-19). When Jesus claims, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing" (Luke 4:21), He describes himself to be the m^ebassēr, who declares the arrival of God's kingly rule (Jesus indicating himself) and, hence, the new era of peace and salvation (cf. Mark 1:15). The evangelists attribute εὐαγγέλιον to Christ on a number of occasions.¹⁹ Jesus appears as both the messenger and the author of the εὐαγγέλιον—as well as its subject—about whom the εὐαγγέλιον is proclaimed.²⁰

Consequently, prior to Paul's ministry, εὐαγγέλιον was already a technical term in early Christian preaching for denoting the authoritative news of Jesus Christ. The early Christian believers knew the content of εὐαγγέλιον (1 Cor 15:1-3). Paul's use of εὐαγγέλιον in the absolute in almost half the passages indicates his readers' knowledge of

¹⁸Goppelt, "Gospel in Paul," 111; O'Brien, *Gospel and Mission*, 81. See also C. C. Broyles, "Gospel (Good News)," in *DJG* (Chicago: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 284.

¹⁹E.g., Mark 1:15; 8:35; 10:29; 13:10; 14:9; Matt 4:23; 9:35; 24:14; 26:13.

²⁰Becker, "Gospel," 2: 110.

the word. Paul does not need any noun or adjective for definition.²¹ It describes the act of proclamation, which is in line with the OT-Jewish usage of the participle noun in the book of Isaiah (40-66)²² (2 Cor 8:18; Phil 4:5, etc.). It is called “God’s good news” time and again.²³ The gospel is equated with Jesus as well (2 Cor 2:12; 9:13; 10:14, etc.). He stresses that the good news is according to the Scriptures (1 Cor 15:1-5); the gospel is the fulfillment of God’s promise in the OT (Rom 1:2). Furthermore, Paul emphasizes the judgment theme that is implicit in the gospel: If they do not accept it, they will be held accountable²⁴ (Rom 2:16; 10:16, 21; 2 Thess 1:8).

Paul’s good news is meant for the Jews first and additionally for the gentiles (Rom 1:16; Gal 2:7-8). Repentance and faith are the essential human condition (1 Thess 1:5, 9; Rom 1:16; 3:22, etc.). He stresses the δύναμις (power) of the gospel (Rom 1:16; 1 Thess 1:5). Moreover, Paul applies the gospel to the forensic language of justification, especially in contexts in which Jewish good works are thought of as a meritorious divine favor (Romans and Galatians). His concept of “the righteousness of God,” which is revealed in the gospel (Rom 1:16) has its roots in the Jewish OT. He stresses the final and absolute nature of the gospel; it is the gospel of truth, power, hope, etc. So it is this gospel for which Paul was “called” and “set apart” to proclaim and expound. It is central to his purpose in writing this letter. The εὐαγγέλιον is then the good news of the arrival of Jesus the Messiah, God’s Son, whose death and resurrection bring salvation for those who

²¹Friedrich, *TDNT* 2: 729.

²²*Ibid.*

²³1 Thess 2:2, 8, 9; 2 Cor 11:7; Rom 1:1; 15:16; 1 Tim 1:11; cf. Mark 1:14; 1 Pet 4:17.

²⁴J. D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 166.

accept this message by faith. The consistent focus of Paul's preaching the gospel is on God's saving action in and through Jesus Christ's atoning death on the cross and His resurrection.²⁵

Called to preach the Gospel of God

Paul describes his call to be an apostle. The letter opening and closing statements of Romans draw attention to his missionary calling as an apostle, with a worldwide commission to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ. In Romans 1:1, he writes, "Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God." In this verse, he qualifies himself as (1) "a servant of Christ Jesus," (2) "called to be an apostle," and (3) "set apart for the gospel of God."²⁶ The opening verse concentrates on Paul's divine commission for the gospel that he must communicate. Each one of the designations is significant for understanding his call. Paul derives the term δούλος from OT use עֶבֶד יְהוָה (*'ebed yhwah*), in which outstanding people—like Moses, Joshua, David, and the prophets,²⁷ are referred to either as "servants of the Lord" or as "servants of God."²⁸ In addition, Paul's apostolic office is attributed to God's gracious will.

²⁵Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Paul the Missionary: Realities, Strategies, and Methods* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), 214.

²⁶Moo (*The Epistle to the Romans*, 40) recognizes three parallel designations that identify (i) his master; (ii) his office; and (iii) his purpose.

²⁷Josh 1:1, 13; 24:29; Ps 89:4, 21; 2 Kgs 17:23; Isa 49:4.

²⁸Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1998), 32; Grant R. Osborne, *Romans*, IVPNTC (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 28.

The Greek word rendering “called” (κλητός)²⁹ in Paul means God’s effective work, by which He calls people to salvation and office.³⁰ It alludes to Paul’s call to the apostolic office, which he attributes to God’s gracious will. By this phrase, Paul asserts that “he was neither self-appointed nor chosen by men in that sacred office.”³¹ The designation “apostle” (ἀπόστολος) is used in every Pauline prescript (except in Philippians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, and Philemon) to mean simply “messenger.” It is a mission word, which more often refers to “missionary,” or “evangelist” (e.g., Rom 16:7; 1 Cor 15:6). Moo thinks that this title carries a stronger sense because Paul has been considered as one among that unique group appointed by Christ himself; and the risen Christ appeared to him (1 Cor 15:8) and chose him for His special mission to preach the gospel to the nations.³² This affirmation is true because Paul himself confirms this in Galatians: “Paul, *an apostle* not from men nor by men but through Jesus Christ and *God the Father who raised him from the dead*” (Gal 1:1). For Paul, God is the One who raised Jesus from the dead, and He is the same God who chose him to be His special messenger to proclaim the good news to the world.

The focus on Paul’s divine commission continues as he claims to be “‘set apart’ (ἀφωρισμένος)³³ for the gospel of God,” who set him apart for apostolic ministry.

²⁹The word rendered “called” (κλητός) is an adjective qualifying the noun “apostle,” so it literally means “a called apostle.” See Barclay M. Newman and Eugene A. Nida, *A Translator’s Handbook on Paul’s Letter to the Romans* (London: United Bible Societies, 1973), 7.

³⁰Schreiner, *Romans*, 32; cf. Charles Hodge, *Romans*, CCC (Philadelphia: James and Claxton, 1864; reprint, Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1993), 12, 20.

³¹Hodge, *Romans*, 12.

³²Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 41-42.

³³The Greek word (ἀφωρισμένος) is (i) in perfect tense, indicating a singular event in the past

Schreiner recalls that the two words “calling”(καλεῖν) and “separate” (ἀφορίζειν) are used as well of Paul’s call for preaching the gospel to the gentiles in Galatians 1:15, in which Paul says, “God who separated me from my mother’s womb and called me through his grace.”³⁴ This echoes the ministry call given to Isaiah (Isa 49:1) and Jeremiah (Jer 1:5), suggesting that Paul is invested with authority from God himself, which is very much similar to the tradition of the prophetic vocation.³⁵ Moreover, in Acts 13:2, Luke employs the same verb of “setting apart” for missionary service of Barnabas and Saul. The emphasis on God’s sovereignty in calling Paul for the missionary task is noteworthy.

Likewise, calling Paul as an apostle and subsequently setting him apart has been a special task in God’s plan of salvation for the world. He specifically mentions that he has been set apart “for” (εἰς) “the gospel of God.” The gospel carries the meaning of the “activity of preaching the gospel,” or it may simply refer to “the message of the gospel itself.”³⁶ The phrase, “the gospel of God,” is one of the most essential terms in Paul’s mission theo-logy. It appears seven times in the Pauline letters (1 Thess 2:2, 8, 9; 2 Cor 11:7; Rom 1:1; 15:16; 1 Tim 1:11). Most importantly, he introduces and concludes the subject—and his exposition of it—in Romans as “the gospel of God” (1:1 and 15:16). Eduard Lohse thus notes that “the gospel of God” frames the letter,³⁷ signifying that

with continuing effects. (ii) It is in passive voice, showing that God “set apart” Paul. It recalls Paul’s Damascus Road experience when he was called and separated for his apostolic office to preach the gospel to the gentiles.

³⁴Schreiner, *Romans*, 33; idem, *Paul: Apostle of God’s Glory in Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 44.

³⁵Schreiner, *Paul*, 44; Osborne, *Romans*, 29.

³⁶Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 42. O’Brien, *Gospel and Mission*, 81.

³⁷Lohse, “Εὐαγγέλιον θεοῦ,” 131.

Paul's primary missionary task is preaching the gospel.

The genitive construction³⁸ “of God” should be understood as both subjective and objective genitive. The construction denotes that Paul's gospel message “originates with God” or “originates in God.” In other words, God is the “source and authority behind the message,” or the gospel is “from God himself” that Paul was called to proclaim. When Paul describes God, he does not speak about any vague or abstract quality or ideology of God. Therefore, “the gospel of God” both is from God and concerns God himself.³⁹ More frequently, Paul considers that this gospel is about Jesus Christ—for example: “the gospel of Christ,”⁴⁰ that is, the good news regarding Christ; “the gospel of his Son” (Rom 1:9; cf. 1:3); “of our Lord Jesus” (2 Thess 1:8); “the gospel of the glory of Christ” (2 Cor 4:4); the gospel of your salvation” (Eph 1:13). In some contexts, Paul utilizes “gospel” in the general sense that “it becomes functionally equivalent to “Christ,” or “God's intervention in Christ.”⁴¹ The early Christian preaching regularly employs the gospel as “the coming of God's rule as evidenced in the coming of Jesus, His death, and resurrection.”⁴² (See Acts 5:32; 15:7; 20:24. See also 1 Cor 15:1-3.) In fact, Paul elaborates on this understanding of the gospel in Romans 1:3-4, which will

³⁸For the scholarly debate on this issue, see Chapter 2, 49, n. 99. A. B. Luter's comment is quite helpful. He says that “in virtually every occurrence of these phrases in Paul, the genitive makes good sense if it is read either way. Sometimes the context appears to underline the objective aspect (e.g., 1 Thess 3:2; 1 Cor 9:12; Gal 1:2, etc.), sometimes the subjective (e. g., 1 Thess 2:2, 8, 9; Rom 1:1, etc.), and either is equally possible.” See A. B. Luter, “Gospel,” in *DPL* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 370.

³⁹Schreiner, *Romans*, 37.

⁴⁰1 Thess 3:2; 1 Cor 9:12; 2 Cor 2:12; 9:13; 10:14; Gal 1:7; Phil 1:27; Rom 15:19.

⁴¹Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 43.

⁴²O'Brien, *Gospel and Mission*, 80.

be discussed in the following.

The gospel that Paul has been called to preach, though, is not his own invention or his own message. He completely denies having received it from any human source, nor did it come to him from the medium of teaching. Paul himself writes, “For I make known to you, brothers, the gospel that has been proclaimed by me, that it is *not of human origin*. For neither did I receive it from man, nor was I taught *it*, but *I received it* through a revelation of Jesus Christ” (Gal 1:1, 11-12). Rather, the gospel came “through a revelation of Jesus Christ” (δι’ ἀποκαλύψεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ). This expression clearly refers to Christ’s appearance to Paul on the Damascus road.⁴³ Paul recognizes his primary missionary task as that of an apostle who has been called and sent to preach the gospel. When he reflects on his calling as a missionary to preach the gospel, he invariably attributes it to God’s grace and His direct revelation of Christ.

The Gospel Foretold in the Scripture and Fulfilled in Christ

Paul’s proclamation of the gospel is due to God’s direct calling and commission. The gospel, to which he was set apart for proclamation to the nations, is “the gospel of God.” In Romans 1:2, Paul further expands “the gospel of God” to that “which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures.” After having defined “the gospel” by the genitive “of God” (θεοῦ), Paul identifies it further by means of the relative clause “which” (ὅ), and makes three emphatic affirmations: (1) He [God]

⁴³Ibid., 3, 57. On the significance of Paul’s Damascus-road experience to his call and conversion, see Seyoon Kim, *The Origin of Paul’s Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 3-31; Donald Senior and C. Stuhlmueller, *Biblical Foundations for Mission* (London: SCM, 1983), 165-71; Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 125-29.

promised beforehand, (2) through His [God's] prophets, (3) in the OT scriptures. The expression underscores both the “promise-fulfillment” pattern and the “trustworthiness of the gospel”⁴⁴ because it is God who promised beforehand (προεπηγγείλατο) in the OT. This statement in verse 2 establishes the “promise-fulfillment” pattern that will dominate Paul's OT usage in the remainder of the epistle.

The Greek verb προεπαγγέλλεσθαι is a two-preposition compound word, which is not common in the NT and appears only in this position and in 2 Cor 9:5. The one-preposition compound verb ἐπαγγέλλεσθαι is used in the sense of “promise,” while the noun ἐπαγγελία occurs much more frequently, especially in the Pauline epistles and particularly in Romans and Galatians. The force of προ- emphasizes the thought of priority that is already present in ἐπαγγέλλεσθαι.⁴⁵ According to Hays, “Paul uses the prefix *pro* before verbs of writing, promising, or proclaiming in order to assert the temporal priority of the scriptural word to the contemporary events in which Paul discerns God's salvific action (e.g., 1:2; 15:4).”⁴⁶ The verb προεπαγγέλλεσθαι is in the middle voice. As Dunn points out, this may be to stress the subject of the promise, “which God promised beforehand,” and “which he promised on his own behalf.”⁴⁷

In the phrase “through his prophets,” Paul employs “prophets” in a generic

⁴⁴C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, vol.1, *Introduction and Commentary on Romans I-VIII*, ICC (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1975; 10th print; London: T. & T. Clark International, 2004), 55; Robert H. Mounce, *Romans*, NAC, vol. 27 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1995), 60; O'Brien, *Gospel and Mission*, 67.

⁴⁵Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 1: 55, n. 3; Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 44, n. 20.

⁴⁶Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 107.

⁴⁷James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, WBC, vol. 38A (Dallas: Word Books, 1988), 10.

sense.⁴⁸ Consequently, this should be understood not as just those whom we normally consider to be OT prophets, but also as the OT inspired men generally, including individuals like Moses (Acts 3:22), David, and Solomon, and others, and along with all the OT writers (cf. Heb 1:1).⁴⁹ It should be noted that the prophets are called “his prophets” (τῶν προφητῶν αὐτοῦ). It simply means that the prophets, through whom the gospel was promised beforehand, are “God’s prophets.” This may reflect Paul’s concern for emphasizing God’s personal involvement in, and as the authority behind, the good news of His gospel. He speaks of men who belong to God as the vehicle of his message.⁵⁰ In fact, Paul views the gospel that he has been proclaiming as stemming from the God of the OT. The present context stresses that God’s promise regarding the Messiah through the prophets has come true.

The expression “in the holy Scriptures” (ἐν γραφαῖς ἁγίαις) refers to the OT (cf. 2 Tim 3:15).⁵¹ It is notable that this is the only NT passage in which the word “holy” is applied to the “Scriptures.” The expression normally has the article, but the Greek possesses the plural without the article (both here and in 16:26). The noun is qualified by the adjective “prophetic” and here by “holy”; hence, it is possible to translate as “holy writings” here. The omission of the article offers an additional solemnity (as in

⁴⁸Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB vol. 33 (New York: Doubleday, 1993; reprint, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 233.

⁴⁹Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 1: 56, n. 4; Newman and Nida, *A Translator’s Handbook*, 8.

⁵⁰Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 41.

⁵¹In 2 Tim 3:15, a similar phrase appears: Ἱερὰ γράμματα. The OT more often is referred simply as “the Scriptures” (Matt 21:42; 22:29; 26:54; John 5:39, etc.).

εὐαγγέλιον θεοῦ in v.1),⁵² or “emphasizes the character of these writings as ‘holy.’”⁵³ It does not make the expression indefinite because the reference to the prophets makes it clear that Paul has in mind the OT. Mounce remarks that this is a brief summary of the method for which God determined to communicate His message with His people. Scripture originated with God. He employed prophets to communicate His will, and they accomplished that purpose by writing down what God was pleased to reveal. The result was Scripture that is holy.⁵⁴ Paul quite infrequently mentions “God” explicitly as the one who speaks in Scripture. Paul seems to emphasize written word (ἡ γραφή) in the Scripture.⁵⁵ Seifrid correctly comments that “where Paul does name God as speaking in Scripture, his emphasis rests on the action of God *here and now* to which the Scripture attests (2 Cor 4:6; 6:16; Gal 3:18).”⁵⁶ Furthermore, according to verse 2, “the gospel of God”—which concerns His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord (vv. 3-4)—is no last-minute appearance on the scene. He came, by God’s appointment, as the fulfillment of promises that go back to the very beginning of the OT Scripture.

⁵²Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 1: 56

⁵³Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 41.

⁵⁴Mounce, *Romans*, 60.

⁵⁵γραφὴ appears 14 times in the Pauline writings. It frequently occurs in the singular with the article, “the Scripture” (Rom 4:3; 9:17; 10:11; 11:2; Gal 3:8, 22; 4:30; 1 Tim 5:18); once it is “all Scripture” (2 Tim 3:16). Plural with the article appears on a few occasions (Rom 15:4; 1 Cor 15:3, 4).

⁵⁶Mark A. Seifrid, “The Knowledge of the Creator and the Experience of Exile: The Contours of Paul’s Theo-logy,” (Paper presented at the SNTS Seminar on “Inhalte und Probleme einer neutestamentlichen Theologie,” Martin Luther Universität, Halle, Wittenberg, 2-7 August, 2005), 5.

The Message and Content of the Gospel of God: God's Son

The message of the gospel is God's "promise," which is presented in those prophetic writings "concerning his [God's] Son." In verses 3-4, Paul introduces the substance of "the gospel of God" just as he mentioned it in the first verse. Verses 3-4 should be recognized as an attribute of εὐαγγέλιον in verse 1, rather than understanding them as a continuation of the relative clause in verse 2.⁵⁷ The prepositional phrase, περὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ, modifies εὐαγγέλιον θεοῦ, expressing its content. The gospel, that is from God, focuses on His Son, and this Son fulfills what He promised in the "holy scriptures."⁵⁸ Paul's reference to Jesus as Son recalls the designation of Israel as God's son.⁵⁹ Most scholars recognize that Paul's introduction of the phrase περὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ is alluding to the pre-existence of Jesus, concerning His Son.⁶⁰ He is incarnate in the seed of David as the messianic king and then appointed as the Son of God through the resurrection. The identity of Jesus as God's Son implies that Christ stands in a unique relationship with the Father. Kramer demonstrates that God's "sending" (Rom 8:3; Gal 4:4) or "giving up" (Rom 8:31-32; cf. John 3:16) His pre-existent Son and Christ's distinctive address to God as "Abba" Father (Rom 8:15; Gal 4:6), suggest this unique

⁵⁷So also UBS text, RSV, et al.; contra Nestle text, NIV, et al. For details, see Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 1: 57.

⁵⁸Schreiner, *Romans*, 38.

⁵⁹Exod 4:22-23; Jer 31:9; Hos 11:1; Ps Sol 18:4; Wis 18:13; Jub 1:24-25.

⁶⁰Martin Hengel, *The Son of God: The Origin of Christology and the History of Jewish-Hellenistic Religion* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976), 60; Stuhlmacher, "The Pauline Gospel," 187-88; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 234; Ernst Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, ed. and trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 10.

relationship between Father and Son.⁶¹ This identity of Christ as God's Son emphasizes the basic truth in Paul's content of the gospel (Rom 1:3-4; 8:3; 1 Cor 8:6; Gal 4:4; Phil 2:6). Joseph Plevnik maintains that it is a consistent theme in Paul.⁶² There are many similar key introductory passages identifying Christ as "His [God's] Son" or "Son of God."⁶³ For Paul, these references indicate that Jesus' identity as the Son of God is integral to the gospel. This intimate relationship between God and the Son opens up a change in the basic understanding of God. For this reason, the following verses 3b-4, concerning God's Son, state that the content of the gospel is God's action in the life of Jesus Christ. In other words, the central theme of the gospel, that is Jesus Christ our Lord, is fully matched by the centrality of God as the initiator (cf. 3:21-26). Verses 3b-4 contain a bipartite structure as Moo and Schreiner have noted in their commentaries.⁶⁴

Verse 3b: τοῦ γενομένου ἐκ σπέρματος Δαυὶδ	κατὰ σάρκα
Verse 4: τοῦ ὀρισθέντος υἱοῦ θεοῦ ἐν δωάμει	κατὰ πνεῦμα ἀγιωσύνης ἐξ ἀναστάσεως νεκρῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν.

This illustrates that (1) every phrase starts with a participle construction; (2) each is qualified by *κατὰ* (according to); (3) each is balanced by *σάρκα* (flesh) and *πνεῦμα* (Spirit); and (4) each signifies a stage or movement. One stage transitions to another. This

⁶¹Werner R. Kramer, *Christ, Lord, Son of God* (London: SCM Press, 1966), 108-27.

⁶²Joseph Plevnik, "The Understanding of God at the Basis of Pauline Theology," *CBQ* 65 (2003): 562.

⁶³E.g., 1 Cor 1:9; 2 Cor 1:19; Gal 1:16 and 1 Thess 1:10.

⁶⁴Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 45; Schreiner, *Romans*, 39.

does not necessarily contrast the human and the divine natures of Christ,⁶⁵ the outward and the inward, nor the external and internal.⁶⁶ These verses are usually understood to be a pre-Pauline formula.⁶⁷ Scholars cite various reasons behind this formulation.⁶⁸

According to Fitzmyer, the title of God's Son governs the entire formula. As a result, both phases (coming from the seed of David, and installed as the Son of God in power by His resurrection) of the Son denote pre-existence.⁶⁹ The Son in verse 3a is described through two participial clauses in verses 3-4. According to Cranfield, the positioning of the phrase τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ before the participial clauses implies that He who became the seed of David and was appointed Son of God in power at the resurrection was

⁶⁵John Calvin, *The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans and to the Thessalonians*, Calvin's Commentaries, trans. R. MacKenzie (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1961), 16; Hodge, *Romans*, 18-21; Mounce, *Romans*, 61.

⁶⁶William Sanday and A. C. Headlam, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, ICC, 5th ed. (1902, reprint, Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1955), 9; James D. G. Dunn, "Jesus—Flesh and Spirit: An Exposition of Romans 1:3-4," *JTS* 24 (1973): 49-57. For an argument against this, see Schreiner, *Romans*, 40-45.

⁶⁷For example, Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, 2 vols. in one, trans. K. Grobel (New York: Scribner, 1951-55; reprint, Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2007), 49; O. Cullmann, *The Christology of the New Testament*, trans. S. C. Guthrie and C. A. M. Hall (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1959), 292; Kramer, *Christ, Lord, Son of God*, 109; Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 1: 57; B. Schneider, "Κατὰ Πνεῦμα Ἀγιωσύνη," *Bib* 48 (1967): 359; Dunn, "Jesus—Flesh and Spirit," 40-68; Paul Beasley-Murray, "Romans 1:3f: An Early Confession of Faith in the Lordship of Jesus," *TynBul* 31 (1980): 145-54. For a detailed survey, see Robert Jewett, "The Redaction and Use of an Early Christian Confession in Romans 1:3-4," in *The Living Text: Essays in Honor of Ernest W. Saunders*, ed. Dennis E. Groh and Robert Jewett (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1985), 99-122; contra A. Fridrichsen, *The Apostle and His Message*, (Uppsala: A. B. Lundequistska Bokhandeln, 1947), 10; R. H. Fuller, *The Foundations of New Testament Christology* (London: Fontana, 1974), 165.

⁶⁸Among them are (i) the participle constructions; (ii) the parallelism of the two clauses; (iii) the lack of articles with many of the nouns; (iv) the presence of non-Pauline terms (here ὁρισθέντος, and πνεῦμα ἁγιωσύνης); (v) theological themes uncommon to Paul, like the Davidic sonship of Jesus, etc. For a more detailed survey on this issue, see Jewett, "The Redaction and Use of an Early Confession," 100-13; Beasley-Murray, "Romans 1:3f," 147-62; Vern C. Poythress, "Is Romans 1:3-4 a Pauline Confession after All?" *ExpT* 87 (1975-76): 180-83.

⁶⁹Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 235; contra James D. G. Dunn, *Christology in the Making: A New Testament Enquiry into the Origins of the Doctrine of the Incarnation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 33-35.

already the Son before these events in His life.⁷⁰ It additionally means that He who existed eternally as the Son was appointed as the Son of God in power, as well as the Son of David. Therefore, the new aspect was not His sonship, but His heavenly appointment as God's Son by virtue of His Davidic sonship. It signifies that the Son reigned with the Father from all eternity. As a result of His incarnation and atoning work, however, He was appointed to be the Son of God who now is both God and human.⁷¹

Cranfield points out that the use of the verb γίνεσθαι (rather than γεννᾶσθαι, which never appears in connection with the birth of Jesus) here, in Galatians 4:4, and in Philippians 2:7 may reflect the tradition of Jesus' birth without human fatherhood.⁷² It is interesting to note that the one who is from the seed of David and of a woman is, in both contexts, called "God's Son." According to Paul Barnett, the verb γίνεσθαι implies movement from one stage to another—that is, from pre-existence to incarnate life as the Son of David.⁷³ It is a movement from son of David (Rom 1:3) to Son of God (Rom 1:4). For Paul, the pre-existent Son is both "promised Messiah" (Rom 1:3) and the very "Son of God" (Rom 1:4). Paul employs a traditional formula connecting the Messiah with the lineage of David,⁷⁴ which is similar to what Peter does at Pentecost (Acts 2:22-36).⁷⁵ It

⁷⁰Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 1: 58.

⁷¹Schreiner, *Romans*, 39.

⁷²Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 1: 59; idem., "Some Reflections on the Subject of the Virgin Birth," *SJT* 41 (1988): 177-98; David Wenham, "The Story of Jesus Known to Paul," in *Jesus of Nazareth: Essays on the Historical Jesus and New Testament Christology*, ed. Joel B. Green and Max Turner (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 1994), 300.

⁷³Paul Barnett, *Romans* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2003), 26, n. 11; see also Osborne, *Romans*, 30.

⁷⁴Douglas J. Moo, "The Christology of the Early Pauline Letters," in *Contours of Christology in the New Testament*, ed. Richard N. Longenecker (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 187; Larry W.

reflects that the Son of God was pre-existent to His earthly birth. Yet, His earthly sojourn was marked by weakness, because He was David's son 'according to flesh' (κατὰ σάρκα, Rom 1:3; cf. 9:5). In other words, as Paul mentions in Rom 8:3, God sent Him "in the likeness of sinful flesh." Consequently, as a human being, Jesus was subject to the rule (κυριεύει) of death (Rom 6:9). The new age arrived, however, with His resurrection. (See below.)

In addition, this Davidic tradition refers to Jesus as the "Royal messianic Son of God." In Rom 1:3-4, there are echoes of 2 Samuel 7:12-14. As the "'seed' (σπέρμα) of David," Jesus was "raised up (ἀνάστασις) from the dead" by God (cf. LXX 2 Sam 7:12). Jesus' appointment as the Son of God in power in Rom 1:4 may echo God's promise in 2 Sam 7:14: "I will be a father to him and he will be to me a son" (cf. 1:9-10; 15:24-28). Hence, one should not ignore the connection between Rom 1:2 and 3. Jesus—as the son of David—fulfills the OT promise that God made regarding a future ruler from David's line.⁷⁶ As a result, in all these actions in Jesus' life as David's son, God was involved both in His earthly life and the fulfillment of the royal-messiahship promise.

Hurtado, *One God, One Lord: Early Christian Devotion and Ancient Jewish Monotheism*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 95.

⁷⁵In Ps Sol 17:21 only, the expression "Son of David" is found in the period before Christianity, but it had become a current expression among the contemporaries of Jesus. The rabbis will often use it (see Franz J. Leenhardt, *The Epistle to the Romans: A Commentary*, trans. by Harold Knight (London: T. & T. Clark, 1961), 36, n.). It is to be noted that the focus of the Davidic origin of Son echoes the OT prophetic expectation – "a ruler will come from Davidic line" promised by God in the Scriptures (Isa 11:1-5; Jer 23:5-6; Ezek 34:23-24). In fact, these words assert the Davidic lineage of Jesus in agreement with the testimony of other parts of the NT (Matt 1:1; 20:30-31; Luke 1:27, 32, 69; 2:4; Acts 2:30; 13:22-23; 2 Tim 2:8; Rev 5:5; 22:16). Thus, the expectation that the Messiah would belong to the family of David was strongly established, although some Jews of the NT period did not regard descent from David as an absolutely essential qualification of the Messiah. (See Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 1: 58.)

⁷⁶Schreiner, *Romans*, 40.

Verse 4, although its meaning is much debated, affirms that God's son (v.3) "was appointed Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead." This does not mean that Jesus was not the Son of God prior to the resurrection. Therefore, according to Warfield:

He was already "the Son of God" when and before he became of the seed of David, and he did not cease to be the Son of God on and by becoming the seed of David. It was rather just because he was the Son of God that he became the seed of David, to become which, in the great sense of the prophetic announcement and of his own accomplishment, he was qualified only by being the Son of God.⁷⁷

Consequently, Paul does not say that He was made the Son of God by the resurrection from the dead, but He was "appointed" or "installed" as the Son of God, in power, by the Spirit of His holiness. The Greek participle *ὀρισθέντος* should not be translated to mean "to declare,"⁷⁸ as if resurrection merely vindicated what Jesus already was. It would then mean that the Son of God, in weakness and lowliness during His earthly life, "through the resurrection . . . became the Son of God in power."⁷⁹ The verb clearly has the meaning "appoint," or "install," or "ordain" in this context.⁸⁰ The latter meaning seems more appropriate, which safeguards the truth that Jesus was the Son of God before, along with after, the resurrection.⁸¹ In this latter sense, we must take *ἐν δυνάμει* not with the verb,⁸²

⁷⁷B. B. Warfield, "The Christ that Paul Preached," *The Expositor* 15 (1918): 99. So also W. C. Van Unnik, "Jesus the Christ," *NTS* 8 (1962): 108.

⁷⁸So also in ASV, NIV, NEB, ESV, NASB, and NRSV.

⁷⁹So also Anders Nygren, *Commentary on Romans*, trans. C. C. Rasmussen (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1949), 51.

⁸⁰For various meanings, see Newman and Nida, *A Translator's Handbook*, 10.

⁸¹John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959), 9-10. Schreiner, *Romans*, 42.

⁸²So also Geneva, NIB, and NIV, etc.

but with the noun Son of God, as most translations do.⁸³ Most commentators correctly contend that the words ἐν δυνάμει modify υἱοῦ θεοῦ. Taking ἐν δυνάμει to υἱοῦ θεοῦ asserts that Jesus did not become the Son of God or the Messiah at His resurrection. The participle ὁρισθέντος is a typical divine passive, which is a periphrasis of God's own action.⁸⁴ Hence, God is the subject in the subsequent events in verse 4, of the life of Jesus as God's Son. For this reason, through the resurrection, God appointed Jesus as the Son of God in power, hence, He is the Lord. The basis of this new status is the "Spirit of holiness" (πνεῦμα ἁγιωσύνης).⁸⁵ This phrase does not denote the divine nature of Jesus (see above) in the NT. Schreiner has suggested that this could more likely refer to the Holy Spirit, although it is used nowhere else in the NT. The difficulty could be overcome if the noun ἁγιωσύνης is taken as a qualitative genitive, which is not at all unusual in Paul, as Schreiner has maintained. As a result, the contrast is not between the two natures of Jesus, but between the flesh and the Holy Spirit.⁸⁶ The appointment of Jesus as the Son of God occurred ἐξ ἀναστάσεως νεκρῶν.

God himself has inaugurated the new age through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and His enthronement as the messianic king, who has been exalted to be our Lord (Phil 2:9-11).⁸⁷ As the Lord, He has the power to dispense salvation to the

⁸³So also Schreiner, *Romans*, 42.

⁸⁴Hengel, *Son of God*, 62.

⁸⁵ This phrase is ascribed to the OT Scripture citation that reflects a literal translation of the Hebrew term רוּחַ קֹדֶשׁ (*rûh qōdēš*), e.g., Ps 51:13; Isa 63:11. It is the Hebrew way of saying "the Holy Spirit." As a result, Paul is referring to the Hebrew idiom. See Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 42-43; Schneider, "Κατὰ Πνεῦμα Ἁγιωσύνης," 380; Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 46.

⁸⁶Schreiner, *Romans*, 43; Osborne, *Romans*, 31-32.

⁸⁷Schreiner, *Paul*, 164-65.

world (Rom 1:9, 16). Jesus Christ, in the opening verse (1:1), has now been given the full title of “Jesus Christ our Lord” (1:4; cf. 1 Cor 1:9).⁸⁸ The lordship of Jesus Christ signifies the universality of the gospel message. Paul explicated the theme of Christ’s lordship in the later chapter in the context of salvation for all humanity, and in the inclusion of the Jews and gentiles in the people of God (see 10:12-13). It is to be noted that—in Paul’s usage—the term *Χριστός*, as a designation for Jesus, is of fundamental significance. The term appears in statements about Jesus’ death and resurrection (Rom 5:6, 8; 6:3-4, 9; 8:11, 34; 10:7; 14:9, 15; 15:3);⁸⁹ the pre-existence of Jesus (1 Cor 10:4; 11:3); His earthly existence (Rom 9:5; cf. 2 Cor 5:16); and His exaltation (Rom 8:34; 10:6; cf. Col 3:1). Moreover, Paul speaks of Jesus as *Χριστός* in statements with respect to His missionary activity of preaching the gospel (Rom 15:18, 20).⁹⁰

In verses 3-4, Paul provides the content of the gospel of God—starting with the birth of His Son and then moves on to the resurrection. The Lord’s death and cross are not noted, which are normally Paul’s way of mentioning the gospel (1 Cor 15:3-5). David Wenham thus holds that—in Romans 1:1-4—Paul summarizes the gospel, not in order to deal with the question of the resurrection of the dead, but in terms of Jesus’ life from the beginning (His birth) to the end (His resurrection).⁹¹ His summary of the gospel focuses

⁸⁸Cf. “Lord, Jesus Christ” (1:7; 13:14; 1 Cor 1:3); “Jesus our Lord” (4:24; 1 Cor 9:1); “our Lord Jesus Christ” (5:1, 11; 15:6, 30; 1 Cor 1:2, 8, 10); “Christ Jesus, our Lord” (6:23; 8:39); “Jesus as Lord” (10:9); “the Lord Jesus” (14:14; 1 Cor 11:23; 16:23; 2 Cor 11:31); “our Lord Christ” (16:18); “our Lord Jesus” (16:20; 1 Cor 5:4; 2 Cor 1:14). See also “Jesus is Lord” (1 Cor 12:3); “Jesus Christ as Lord” (2 Cor 4:5); “Christ Jesus as Lord” (Col 2:6); “Jesus Christ is Lord” (Phil 2:11); “Christ Jesus my Lord” (Phil 3:8).

⁸⁹Cf. 1 Cor 1:23; 2:2; 8:11; 15:3-5, 12-17, 20, 23; Gal 2:19, 21; 3:1, 13; Eph 5:2.

⁹⁰Cf. 1 Cor 1:17, 23; 2:2; 15:12; 2 Cor 1:19; 4:5; Gal 4:14; Eph 3:4; Phil 1:15, 17-18; Col 4:3.

⁹¹David Wenham, “From Jesus to Paul – via Luke.” in *The Gospel to the Nations: Perspectives on Paul’s Mission in Honor of Peter O’Brien*, ed. Peter Bolt and Mark Thompson (Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 91-92.

on Jesus Christ, the Son of God. He is the pre-existent Son, incarnated in the flesh. He lived and died as the historical Jesus, without discontinuity, and was made the risen and exalted Lord. Christ is the embodiment of the gospel, which is the power of God for the salvation of the entire world. This is the message that Paul was called and commissioned to proclaim to all human beings.

It can be easily observed that Paul hovers from the gospel of “God” to the gospel “concerning the Son.” Furthermore, he defines the gospel as “the power of God” (δύναμις θεοῦ) that results in salvation for all humanity (the Jew and the Greek, 1:16). The gospel as the δύναμις θεοῦ “signifies the effective and transforming power that accompanies the preaching of the gospel.”⁹² In another place, Paul calls the gospel “the word of the cross,” and it is “the power of God” (δύναμις θεοῦ) to those who are saved (1 Cor 1:18). Gospel preaching is so powerful that it brings about salvation for those who believe in its message. Also, in 1:16-17, Paul shows that—in the same gospel—God’s righteousness is revealed, which is of great importance in Paul’s mission theology (3:21-31). This gospel of God’s righteousness is essential because it focusses on the basis upon which believers enter into a relationship with God through His Son’s atoning work. Paul’s localizing of God’s righteousness exclusively in the gospel indicates that “he refers to the resurrection of the crucified Christ.”⁹³ In other words, God’s saving activity is displayed in Christ’s atoning death on the cross and in His resurrection. God’s saving act of righteousness is available to all, apart from the law and works, by faith alone. (See

⁹²Schreiner, *Romans*, 60.

⁹³Mark A. Seifrid, *Christ, Our Righteousness*, NSBT 9 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 46.

Chapter 3 for additional details.) Paul was commissioned to proclaim this gospel to the whole world.

Paul's Mission as Reaching All the Nations

Paul was called not only to preach the gospel, but he was commissioned to preach the gospel to the gentiles/nations, which God had planned long in advance of the fact. He speaks of himself as the apostle to the ἔθνη (Rom 11:13; cf. Gal 2:8-9; Eph 3:8; Rom 15:16, 18). His mission is bringing about the obedience of faith among the nations (Rom 1:5; 16:26). Paul's gospel proclaims God's saving work in Christ apart from the law and works. Therefore, Paul's "gospel had a 'gentile principle' and orientation from the outset," as Hultgren has emphasized.⁹⁴ This does not mean the exclusion of the Jews by Paul (see 1 Cor 9:20). The place of the Jews in the history of God's saving activity was still an important element in Paul's scheme of his mission to the nations, which he attempts to work out in Romans 9-11. Despite his special calling as missionary to the gentiles (11:13; cf. Gal 2:8-9), Paul was obligated to preach the gospel to both Jews and gentiles. Conversely, he preached the gospel without any obligation of circumcision and subsequent observance of the law on the part of gentiles. In effect, he carried out his missionary task essentially among the gentiles.

The Use of the Term ἔθνη

The Greek plural term ἔθνη (*ethnē*;⁹⁵ Hebrew, *gôyim*) is usually translated

⁹⁴Hultgren, *Paul's Gospel and Mission*, 126.

⁹⁵The singular Greek term for gentile is ἔθνος (*ethnos*), which is never applied to individuals (the exception is Gal 2:14) in the NT. When the singular ἔθνος does appear, however, it always refers to "a people group" or "nation"—often the Jewish nation, while the plural ἔθνη is usually translated "gentiles" to

“gentiles.” The term can mean both “gentiles” and “nations,” and alludes to “the non-Jewish nations of the world as ethnic, religious, cultural, and frequently political and linguistic entities.”⁹⁶ In the LXX and in the Jewish literature of the post-Exilic period, the Greek word ἔθνη furnishes three possible meanings: (1) the “nations” of the world, including the nation of Israel;⁹⁷ (2) “all nations” apart from Israel; (3) the individual “pagans,”⁹⁸ that is, non-Israelites and non-Jews.⁹⁹ The plural ἔθνη does not always denote “people groups,” but occasionally it simply refers to “gentile individuals.”¹⁰⁰ Hence, Schnabel recognizes that Paul uses ἔθνη in this sense: (1) as a designation for the “nations” of the world, including Israel (Rom 2:24; 4:17, 18; 10:19; 15:9b-12; Gal 3:8); (2) as a designation for all nations that are distinct from the people of Israel (e.g., Rom 1:5, 13-14; 15:10-11; Gal 2:15); (3) as a designation for individual “pagans,” that is, non-Jews (Rom 11:13; 1 Cor 12:2; Eph 2:11); and (4) in the sense of “non-Jews”—also for

keep them distinct from the Jewish people. Paul never uses the singular form. For details and a list of references in the Scripture, see John Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad: The Supremacy of God in Missions*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 183-84. Cf. James M. Scott, *Paul and the Nations: The Old Testament and Jewish Background of Paul's Mission to the Nations with special reference to the Destination of Galatians*, WUNT 84 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1995), 121-24.

⁹⁶Hultgren, *Paul's Gospel and Mission*, 126.

⁹⁷Tracing the implementation of the term ἔθνος/ ἔθνη in the OT, James M. Scott discovers the “interplay between Israel as a nation and the other nations of the world.” See Scott, *Paul and the Nations*, 58.

⁹⁸The English term ‘gentile’ stems from the Latin ‘gentilis,’ meaning “belonging to the same family or clan (*gens*), stock, or race.” This came to be used in later ecclesiastical language for “heathen” and “pagan,” defined as “of or pertaining to any or all of the nations, other than the Jews.” For more details, see Schnabel, *Paul the Missionary*, 219-20.

⁹⁹Scott identifies this category as “‘foreign nationals,’ i.e., individuals of any nation other than the nation of the Jews. . . . the term is found only in the plural; there is no corresponding usage in the singular for an individual ‘foreign national’ or ‘foreigner’ . . . this third use of ἔθνη retains the idea of ‘nation’ and does not denote ‘pagan’ per se although it may have that connotation at times.” See Scott, 58.

¹⁰⁰Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad*, 184. See note 12 for a list of references.

non-Jewish (gentile) Christians (Rom 11:13; 15:27; 16:4; Gal 2:12, 14; Eph 3:1).¹⁰¹

Although Paul frequently employs ἔθνη to mean “gentiles” as opposed to Jews in his epistles,¹⁰² correspondingly, in the context of OT quotations from LXX, he always utilizes ἔθνη to signify “nations” of the world that are outside the people Israel (Rom 2:24; 4:17, 18; 10:19; 15:9b-12; Gal 3:8).¹⁰³ When referencing to the “gentiles” (ἔθνη) or the “Greeks” (Ἕλλην, *Hellēn*), Paul has in mind the people group “who do not belong to Israel, who are not Jewish, who are not members of God’s covenant people and who are not circumcised.”¹⁰⁴ This clarifies that—when Paul speaks of himself as “the apostle to the ἔθνη (gentiles)” —he is, in fact, alluding to “all the nations” (πάντα τὰ ἔθνη), in the sense of people groups outside Israel. Although Paul never calls Israel a “nation” per se (an exception is the citation from Gen 12:3 [18:18] in Gal 3:8), he frequently cites it as a λαός (people; see Rom 10:12; 11:1-2; 15:10; cf. 1 Cor 14:21), which is often synonymous with ἔθνος in the OT (e.g., Exod 19:5-6).¹⁰⁵ For instance, Paul’s citations of Deuteronomy 32:43 and Psalm 117:1 in Romans 15:10-11, in which ἔθνη is contrasted to the λαός (people) of God, present good examples of this usage. This means that Paul does not draw back from preaching to the Jews (1 Cor 9:20).¹⁰⁶ Despite his call to preach the gospel specifically to the gentiles, “the priority of the ‘Jew’ remains fundamental to his

¹⁰¹Schnabel, *Paul the Missionary*, 218-19.

¹⁰²E.g., Rom 2:14; 3:29-30; 1 Cor 1:23; 2 Cor 11:26; Gal 2:12, 14-15.

¹⁰³Hultgren, *Paul’s Gospel and Mission*, 126.

¹⁰⁴Schnabel, *Paul the Missionary*, 218.

¹⁰⁵Scott, *Paul and the Nations*, 121-22.

¹⁰⁶For more details, see Schnabel, *Paul the Missionary*, 215-18.

gospel.”¹⁰⁷ Consequently, they are included in his mission to the nations, as well.

The Commission to Preach to All the Nations, Including the Jews

When Paul reflected on his mission to the gentiles, he considered his role as an apostle commissioned to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ specifically to them because he speaks of himself, “I am the apostle to the gentiles” (Rom 11:13; cf. Gal 2:8-9, 15-16). His commission to preach the gospel to the gentiles is attributed to his call and conversion during the Damascus road experience.¹⁰⁸ Based on Paul’s letters and Luke’s account of the book of Acts,¹⁰⁹ the majority of scholars agree that “‘Damascus’ was the hour in which Paul became a missionary to the Gentiles,”¹¹⁰ although they differ concerning whether this experience is the result of his “call” or “conversion, or for other reasons.”¹¹¹ Ferdinand Hahn and others contend that the gentile mission is the result of the Jews’ rejection of the Christian gospel.¹¹² Francis Watson considers that Paul turned

¹⁰⁷For a defense of this view, see Seifrid, *Christ, Our Righteousness*, 19-21, 151-69.

¹⁰⁸For details, see Kim, *The Origin of Paul’s Gospel*, 56-66.

¹⁰⁹See Gal 1:15-16; 1 Cor 9:1; 15:8; Acts 9:1-19; 22:3-16; 26:9-18.

¹¹⁰Krister Stendahl (*Paul among Jews and Gentiles and Other Essays* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976]), 7-23; John B. Polhill, “Paul: Theology Born of Mission,” *RevExp* 78 (1981): 233-47; James D. G. Dunn, “A Light to the Gentiles: The Significance of the Damascus Road Christophany for Paul,” in *The Glory of Christ in the New Testament: Studies in Christology in Memory of George Bradford Caird*, ed. L. D. Hurst and N. T. Wright (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987), 251-66; Paul W. Bowers, “Mission,” *DPL*, 608-19; O’Brien, *Gospel and Mission*, 22-25; Terence L. Donaldson, “Israelite, Convert, Apostle to the Gentiles: The Origin of Paul’s Gentile Mission,” in *The Road to Damascus: The Impact of Paul’s Conversion on His Life, Thought, and Ministry*, ed. Richard N. Longenecker (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 62-84; Andreas J. Köstenberger and Peter T. O’Brien, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth: A Biblical Theology of Mission*, NSBT 11 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 161-64.

¹¹¹For details and a survey of different viewpoints, see Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Early Christian Mission*, vol. 2, *Paul and the Early Church* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press; Leicester: Apollos, 2004), 931-45. See also Kim, *The Origin of Paul’s Gospel*, 56-66.

¹¹²Ferdinand Hahn, *Mission in the New Testament* (London: SCM Press, 1981), 134. For a

to the gentile mission as “a response to Jewish resistance to the gospel and consequent alienation from the Jewish community.”¹¹³ However, in Acts, Luke continues to describe Paul’s missionary work among the Jews even after Acts 13 and 18, in which Paul confronted rejections (13:46-47; 18:6; 28:25-28). None of the passages gives any indication of the Jews’ final gospel rejection.¹¹⁴ Jacob Jervell and others maintain exactly the opposite view. According to them, Acts emphasizes that the gentile mission originated in the fact that Israel has accepted the gospel.¹¹⁵ Jouette M. Bassler bases her interpretation on the Jewish notion of God’s impartiality: that is, He rewards the righteous and punishes the sinner. God will treat Israel, as He treats the gentile nations, based on sin. For this reason, she takes Romans 1:18-2:29 and reinterprets Romans 3: 21-31, saying that God achieves impartial treatment of the Jews and gentiles—not in punishment and judgment—but in replacing the notion of works by the principle of faith.¹¹⁶ The theological ‘justification’ of the gentile mission for Paul rests not in the idea of impartiality, though, but in God’s new revelation in Jesus Christ, in which God fulfills His promises and offers salvation to all nations.¹¹⁷

critique of this view, see Schnabel, *Early Christian Mission*, 2: 932.

¹¹³Francis Watson, *Paul, Judaism, and the Gentiles: A Sociological Approach*, SNTSMS 56 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 79-82.

¹¹⁴For a further defense against Jewish rejection, see Schnabel, *Early Christian Mission*, 2: 932-33.

¹¹⁵Jacob Jervell, *Luke and the People of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1972). This view is partially correct; however, the entrance of gentiles into the people of God depends not on Israel’s acceptance or rejection of the gospel, but on the fulfillment of Israel’s promise.

¹¹⁶Jouette M. Bassler, “Luke and Paul on Impartiality,” *Bib* 66 (1985): 546-48, 551.

¹¹⁷For a critique of Bassler’s view, see Schnabel, *Early Christian Mission*, 2: 933.

In Romans 1:1, Paul affirms his calling as an apostle with the task of preaching the gospel. The gospel of God is ‘concerning His Son,’ and it is proclaimed by Paul’s apostleship: “. . . the gospel of God . . . concerning His Son . . . through whom (δι’ οὗ) we received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the nations for the sake of his name (ὕπὲρ τοῦ ὀνόματος αὐτοῦ) . . .” (1:1-5). Verse 5 (in the Greek text) is framed by two prepositional phrases, indicating that the Christ, the Son of God, is both the instrument ‘through Him (whom)’ (δι’ οὗ), and the recipient ‘for His name’s sake’ (ὕπὲρ τοῦ ὀνόματος αὐτοῦ), of Paul’s mission. This indicates that Christ is the means through whom he received his missionary commission and the focus of gospel preaching. Paul’s goal is honoring and glorifying the name of Jesus. He received “grace and apostleship,” which imply one thing.¹¹⁸ His missionary calling as apostle to the nations (11:13; 15:16; Acts 9:15; 22:21; Gal 2:8-9) is Christ’s undeserved gift of grace.¹¹⁹

Paul’s missionary calling as an apostle is intended for “all the nations” (πᾶσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν). In the context of his missionary calling, ‘all’ (πᾶσιν) is quite significant. By this, he is indicating the universal aspect of his mission. No people group or ethnic group should be excluded,¹²⁰ including Jews. (See 1:16 and subsequent references, e.g., Rom 2:14; 3:29; 9:24; 11:13, 25; 15:8-12; Gal 2:8-9.)¹²¹ Thus, in the beginning of his letter,

¹¹⁸Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 51.

¹¹⁹Osborne, *Romans*, 32.

¹²⁰Schreiner, *Romans*, 35.

¹²¹Cf. D. B. Garlington, *Faith, Obedience, and Perseverance: Aspects of Paul’s Letter to the Romans*, WUNT 79 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1994), 234. Schreiner (*Romans*, 34, n. 14), admits, though, that none is excluded, yet Jews are not included here because he understands that the term ἔθνεσιν is regularly used to imply the gentiles.

Paul emphasizes the inclusion of the nations in the people of God on the same terms as the Jews, which is often declared in this letter (e.g., Rom 3:22, 31; 4:11-12, 16-17; 10:11-13; 16:26). Inclusion of the gentiles thus is one of the major themes in Romans.

Paul describes a similar view in Galatians 1:11-17. Along this line, he writes to the Galatians that “. . . one who [God] set me apart from my mother’s womb and called *me* by his grace was pleased to reveal his Son in me in order that I would proclaim the gospel *about* him among the Gentiles” (Gal 1:15-16). This is Paul’s first written account regarding his missionary commission. He provides his own testimony about receiving the gospel by a revelation from Jesus Christ, and his missionary calling to proclaim God’s Son among the gentiles. In Ephesians 3:1-13, Paul once more attributes his missionary commission to the Damascus road experience. In addition to gospel revelation and grace given for preaching to the gentiles, he explains the revelation of the “mystery” to him (3:3; cf. Rom 16:25), which is God’s plan for including the gentiles in His salvation.¹²² Unlike that of other apostles, Paul’s apostleship explains the distinguishing character of his missionary commission, which is directed to a global mission.

In Romans 1:14-15, Paul continues his missionary calling to all nations and people groups: “I am under obligation both to *Greeks* and to *barbarians*, both to *the wise* and to *the foolish* [emphasis added]. Thus I am eager to proclaim the gospel also to you who *are* in Rome.” This statement should be understood in the context of the main theme of the letter—namely, Romans 1:16: “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to *everyone who believes*, to *the Jew* first and also to *the Greek*” [emphasis added]. Paul describes himself as a missionary to people who have

¹²²O’Brien, *Gospel and Mission*, 17.

never heard the gospel (Rom 15:20). He declares in these verses that God has commissioned him to proclaim the gospel to all people without any distinction: whether they are cultural elites ("Ελλήσιν), uncultured people or foreigners (βαρβάρους), educated 'wise' (σοφοῖς), or uneducated 'foolish' (ἀνοήτοι).¹²³ Paul, as a missionary to the gentiles, deliberately disregards these social and cultural categories and classifications, when it comes to the preaching of the gospel. Faith in Christ's atoning work as redemptive trust upon the righteousness of God is open to both Jews and gentiles,¹²⁴ even to the Romans (1:15). He once again reiterates his missionary commission given as grace by God to be a minister 'for the gentiles' (εἰς τὰ ἔθνη) in the priestly service of the gospel: ". . . because of the grace that has been given to me by God, with the result that I am a servant of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, serving the gospel of God as a priest, in order that the offering of the Gentiles may become acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit" (Rom 15:15-16). Paul describes that his mission aims to include both Jews and gentiles for expanding the new people of God. He applies this priestly-cultic term to his missionary work as an act of sacrifice, which "takes place outside of the temple, outside of Jerusalem, outside of the Holy Land, indeed outside of the people of God *in the world*."¹²⁵

¹²³For various interpretations of the two pairs of people in this verse, see Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 61-62.

¹²⁴Schnabel, *Early Christian Mission*, 2: 970-71.

¹²⁵Ibid., 2: 976. See 2:975-79 for a detailed summary of the missionary significance for this passage.

In Romans 10:14-21, Paul provides further support for his own missionary calling for worldwide mission, which he introduces with a quotation from Joel in Romans 10:13 that “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Joel 2:23):

¹⁴ How then will they call upon *him* in whom they have not believed? And how will they believe *in him* about whom they have not heard? And how will they hear about *him* without one who preaches *to them*? ¹⁵ And how will they preach, unless they are sent? Just as it is written, “How timely *are* the feet of those who bring good news of good things.” [Isa 52:7; Nah 1:15] ¹⁶ But not all have obeyed the good news, for Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed our report?” [Isa 53:1] ¹⁷ Consequently, faith *comes* by hearing, and hearing through the word about Christ. ¹⁸ But I say, they have not heard, have they? On the contrary, “Their voice has gone out to all the earth, and their words to the ends of the inhabited world.” [Ps 19:4] ¹⁹ But I say, Israel did not know, did they? First, Moses says, “I will provoke you *to jealousy* by *those who are* not a nation; by a senseless nation I will provoke you *to anger*.” [Deut 32:21] ²⁰ And Isaiah is very bold and says, “I was found by those who did not seek me; I became known to those who did not ask for me.” [Isa 65:1] ²¹ But about Israel he says, “The whole day *long* I held out my hands to a disobedient and resistant people.” [Isa 65:2].¹²⁶

Some scholars suggest that Paul discusses “the mission to Israelites—that is, to the Jews,” in Romans 10:14-18.¹²⁷ Others have defended the mission to the gentiles¹²⁸ but, according to Richard Bell, Paul stresses his apostolic missionary effort to reach both Jews and gentiles.¹²⁹ The “‘they’ are to call on” (ἐπικαλέσονται) in Romans 10:14 is referred to here as the “all (who) call on Him” (ἐπικαλουμένους) in Romans 10:12, in which he asserts that “there is no distinction between Jew and Greek.” In fact, Paul’s usage of “all”

¹²⁶For a summary of Paul’s missionary implications for this passage, see Schnabel, *Early Christian Mission*, 2: 971-74.

¹²⁷Sanday and Headlam, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 293-95; C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, vol. 2, *Commentary on Romans IX-XVI and Essays*, ICC (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1979; 7th printing, London: T. & T. Clark International, 2004), 533; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 595; Peter Stuhlmacher, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans: A Commentary*, trans. S. J. Hafemann (Louisville: Westminster, 1994), 158.

¹²⁸Watson, *Paul, Judaism, and the Gentiles*, 166-67; James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, WBC, vol. 38B (Dallas: Word, 1988), 620.

¹²⁹Richard H. Bell, *The Irrevocable Call of God: An Inquiry into Paul’s Theology of Israel*, WUNT 184 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 83-105.

(παῖς)—in verses 11-13, with specific reference to “no distinction between Jews and gentiles” in verse 12—signifies the universal scope of his missionary proclamation of the gospel. In verse 13, he affirms a universally applicable missionary principle—that is, salvation is presented to all who call upon the name of the Lord. The quotation from Isaiah 52:7, at the end of verse 15, implies scriptural confirmation of the necessary role of preaching and suggests fulfillment that God has sent the messenger or preacher. Paul’s own usage indicates an allusion to gospel preaching by him and other “authorized messengers” sent out by God.¹³⁰ He omits the phrase “on the mountains,” which focusses the message from the messengers of joy proclaimed by Isaiah on Mount Zion. Paul highlights his conviction—as a missionary to the nations—though, that the mission of the messengers of the gospel is a universal one. The language of Psalm 19:4 in Romans 10:18 may denote God’s revelation in nature, to which the psalm refers, that carries with it the gospel message; hence, the Jews might have heard or experienced the gospel in the witness of nature.¹³¹ The context, however, illustrates that, “just as the revelation of God in nature is universal and makes no distinction between Jews and gentiles, so the historical revelation of God in the gospel of Jesus has gone forth with universality to all places and to all peoples.”¹³² Therefore, Paul’s citation of Psalm 19:4 denotes the worldwide scope of the proclamation of the gospel.¹³³

¹³⁰Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 663-64.

¹³¹So Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Romans*, 234.

¹³²Allan F. Johnson, *Romans*, LMC (Chicago: Moody Press, 2000), 186.

¹³³Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 175.

In Romans 11, Paul furnishes a specific statement of his missionary calling as “the apostle to the gentiles” (εἰμι ἐγὼ ἐθνῶν ἀπόστολος, 11:13). He interprets this statement of his missionary calling in the context of Israel’s “jealousy” in 11:11-14, and in terms of God’s salvation-historical purposes for the world. Paul wants the gentile acceptance of the gospel, primarily outside Israel, to provoke the unbelieving Jews to “jealousy.”¹³⁴ He hopes that the Jews who have “stumbled” (11:11)—that is, rejected Jesus, the Messiah, and the righteousness of God that He offers—will recognize the reality of messianic salvation in the gentile.¹³⁵ From this significant evidence provided above, Paul demonstrates that he understands his gospel and his missionary calling as “the apostle to the gentiles.”

The Inclusion of the Gentiles and Witness of the Scripture

One of the important themes of Paul’s mission theology, especially of the letter to the Romans, is the inclusion of the gentiles,¹³⁶ which is not his own idea. As the gospel was foretold in the Scriptures for the salvation of all people, Scripture foretold the inclusion of the gentiles, as well. Scriptural witness is overwhelming in Romans because of the many OT citations in which ἔθνη occurs. Of the 53 times that ἔθνη appears in Paul’s letters,¹³⁷ of which 28 times are in Romans alone, approximately 30 percent occurs in

¹³⁴For details, see Richard H. Bell, *Provoked to Jealousy: The Origin and Purpose of the Jealousy Motif in Romans 9-11*, WUNT 2.63 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1994).

¹³⁵Schnabel, *Early Christian Mission*, 2: 974.

¹³⁶Stendahl (*Paul among Jews and Gentiles*, 73-100) thinks that the inclusion of the gentiles is the primary theme for Paul. He defends this view through the theme of “justification by faith,” which is the central theme of Romans for the majority of scholars.

¹³⁷For example, Romans 28 times; 1 Corinthians 3; 2 Corinthians 1; Galatians 10; Ephesians 5;

connection with OT citations.¹³⁸ It has been demonstrated in the previous chapter that God's promises to Abraham and His saving activity in Christ's atoning work constitute the foundation for the inclusion of the gentiles, not merely the Jews, into the people of God. As a matter of fact, the OT abounds with promises and hope that the day will come when people from all the nations of the world will worship God (cf. Rev 5:9; 7:9). These OT promises form the foundation of the NT mission to the nations, and Paul's letter to the Romans, in particular.

Although God's method of working is through a particular person, His promise of blessing in the OT Scripture encompasses the entire world. According to Walter C. Kaiser,

The fact remains that the goal of the Old Testament was to see both Jews and Gentiles come to a saving knowledge of the Messiah who was to come. Anything less than this goal was a misunderstanding and an attenuation of the plan of God. God's eternal plan was to provide salvation for all peoples; it was never intended to reserve for one special group, such as Jews, even as an initial offer.¹³⁹

Paul's citing of the *Abrahamic promise*, therefore, plays a prominent role in his contention concerning the inclusion of the gentiles into God's people, which he describes in Romans 4:1-25. In the previous passage, Paul attests that "all" are justified by faith apart from the works of the law (Rom 3:27-28). How is this possible? Paul appeals to the well-known Jewish *Shema*' of the Torah affirming that "God is one" (Deut 6:4). Consequently, God is the God of both Jews and gentiles. He declares that both are

Colossians 1; 1 Thessalonians 2; 1 Timothy 2; and 2 Timothy 1.

¹³⁸Cf. Rom 2:24 (Isa 52:5); 4:17 (Gen 17:5); 4:18 (Gen 15:5); 9:24-26 (Hos 2:25; 2:1); 10:19 (Deut 32:21); 15:9 (Ps 18:49 [17:50 LXX]); 15:10 (Deut 32:43); 15:11 (Ps 117:1 [116:1 LXX]); 15:12 (Isa 11:10).

¹³⁹Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *Mission in the Old Testament: Israel as Light to the Nations* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 10.

righteous in exactly the same way, or by faith apart from works of the law (3:28-30).¹⁴⁰ In chapter 4, to reinforce these above principles of justification (namely, justification by faith alone, and all are justified in the same way), Paul appeals to Abraham, who is the forefather of the Jewish people (Gen 12-24) held in high honor. God granted the promises of salvation to Abraham for all people. Paul wants to show that Abraham, who is the fountainhead of the Jewish people, was justified by faith apart from ‘works,’ and ‘circumcision,’ and the inclusion of both Jews and gentiles as Abraham’s children is essential.¹⁴¹

In Romans 4, Paul presents the following lines of argument to logically prove the inclusion of the gentiles—drawing evidence from the Scriptures—especially appealing to Abraham: (1) His justification by faith apart from the law and the implications of Genesis 15:6 (Rom 4:1-8). (2) Abraham was justified before his circumcision and thus is the father of all who believe, gentile as well as Jew (9-12). (3) He received the promise of righteousness, which comes by faith. As a result, all who experience God’s grace through faith are Abraham’s seed (13-16). (4) Abraham believing God in terms of his faith is as significant as shown in Isaac’s birth (17-22). (5) Abraham applied his faith.

¹⁴⁰Richard B. Hays, *The Conversion of the Imagination: Paul as Israel’s Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 74. Cf. Jouette M. Bassler, *Divine Impartiality: Paul and a Theological Axiom*, SBLDS 59 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1981), 156-58.

¹⁴¹Because this discussion concentrates more on the theme of gentile inclusion in the community of God’s people, one may think of this work as reducing the implications of ‘justification by faith’ to ethnic concerns. Paul treats Abraham, though, “not for the sake of *ad hominem*.” He knows the importance of justification as the fulfillment of God’s promise in Jesus Christ, and thus takes time to clarify the significance of Abraham, to whom the promise was given. See Seifrid, *Christ, Our Righteousness*, 68. Contra Hays, *The Conversion of the Imagination*, 75. Commenting on Rom 3:27-4:1, he suggests that “Paul’s concern focuses not on the mechanics of justification but on the relation of Jews and Gentiles in light of the message of justification.”

Paul shows that Abraham could not perform the works necessary to boast before God (4:2; 3:27) because, according to the Scripture, Abraham's faith was "credited to him as righteousness" (4:3; Gen 15:6). Abraham's trust in God's promise was reckoned to him as righteousness, which suggests that the divine reckoning is entirely different from human calculation.¹⁴² God credited Abraham's faith as righteousness, not his works. His "faith" is his complete trust in God, with reference to God's promise that he would have a natural descendant (vv. 4-5). This promise refers to the renewal of the one that God had already made to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3.¹⁴³ It includes both the promise with reference to his offspring, which he believed and which was counted to him as righteousness, and also God's worldwide blessing promised through him, which he describes in the following verses.

For this reason, Paul believes that the promises God gave to the patriarch Abraham not only belong to him, but to his believing offspring, as well (Rom 9-11). Gentiles can share this blessing of promise only by their inclusion in Israel according to the same terms as their patriarch Abraham.¹⁴⁴ Therefore, in 4: 9-12, Paul no longer deliberates upon the problem of *how* Abraham was justified, but rather the question of *when* he was counted as righteous.¹⁴⁵ Because the promise necessitates the 'righteousness of faith,'¹⁴⁶ Paul maintains that God reckoned the father of the Jews to be righteous

¹⁴²Seifrid, *Christ, Our Righteousness*, 68.

¹⁴³Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 261; Schreiner, *Romans*, 215.

¹⁴⁴Seifrid, *Christ, Our Righteousness*, 69.

¹⁴⁵Hays, *The Conversion of the Imagination*, 75.

¹⁴⁶Seifrid, *Christ, Our Righteousness*, 69.

because of his faith in God's promise before he was circumcised—that is, when Abraham was a gentile (v. 10). He was first declared not guilty by faith (Gen 15) and then was circumcised (Gen 17) about fourteen years later. Paul recognizes a divine purpose in this order, and this objective is the inclusion of the gentiles in God's plan of salvation. As the uncircumcised Abraham is reckoned as righteous by faith, so also this faith righteousness includes the uncircumcised gentiles only by faith. In the same way, the circumcised Jews require the same faith of the uncircumcised Abraham to be counted as righteous. Thus, both the gentiles and the Jews are rightly called Abraham's children.

Paul turns from the circumcision issue to the law. He contends that it was not through the law that Abraham and his offspring received the 'promise' (a key term in vv. 13-17, which appears four times including the verb, adding a fifth reference). God's promise is identified with Abraham, who would be "heir of the world" (4:13). This is related to the Abrahamic covenant, which says that he would have his own offspring (Gen 12:2; 13:16; 15:5; 17:5-6); be a blessing to the nations (Gen 12:3; 18:18; 22:18); and inherit the Promised Land (Gen 12:7; 13:15; 15:7; 17:8). This "heir of the world" promise could be the summary of the Abrahamic covenant from "the stand point of the universal effect of the coming Messiah. Abraham and his offspring would inherit the world through the victory of Christ over the world."¹⁴⁷ Paul already alluded to the promise to Abraham: that he should be "the father of many nations" (vv. 11-12, 17-18; Gen 15:5). This promise of *heir of the world* cannot be attained through the law, but just through the righteousness that comes by faith. Only faith will guarantee the literal fulfillment of the promise to Abraham of becoming the father to many nations. Paul

¹⁴⁷Osborne, *Romans*, 113.

argues that, if the fulfillment of the promise depends on observance of the law, then Jews alone will participate in the blessing because the law was given only to them—not to the gentiles.

The faith that brought righteousness without works to Abraham's account brings righteousness to all nations in the gospel of Jesus Christ, too. This trust finds its object in the same living God of Abraham. He is the God who raised His own Son, not from the dead womb, but from the grave (v. 24). It is by sharing faith in Jesus Christ, apart from any meritorious work, that the nations, both Jews and gentiles—are united in God's promise to Abraham. According to Mark Seifrid, "Christians therefore not only believe in the same God as Abraham; they grasp the same word of promise as he did, now as 'promise in fulfillment' in Jesus 'who was raised for our justification' (4:23-25)."¹⁴⁸ So, Paul says, that is the reason it depends on faith, that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his offspring—not only to the adherent of the law, but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all, as it is written, "I have made you the father of many nations" (4:16-17).

In addition, Paul's discussion about Israel and the gentiles in Romans 9-11 provides a great deal of understanding of the fulfillment of the promises made to Abraham. A brief observation will be made due to the limited scope. For instance, in Romans 9:24-26, Paul says,

Even us whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles? As indeed he says in Hosea, "Those who were not my people I will call 'my people,' and her who was not beloved I will call 'beloved.'" And in the very place where it was said to them, "You are not my people," there they will be called "sons of the living God."

¹⁴⁸Seifrid, *Christ, Our Righteousness*, 69.

In these verses, Paul points out that God has called “us” not “from the Jews” (ἐξ Ἰουδαίων) only but also “from the gentiles” (ἐξ ἐθνῶν). The Apostle appeals to the witness of the OT Scripture citing from Hosea 2:25, and argues that God promises to call people who were not formerly His people (“not my people,” τὸν οὐ λαόν μου) to be His own (“my people,” λαόν μου; cf. Hos 1:9; 2:1). Hosea’s prophecies originally were addressed to the Restoration of Israel after the Exile. Paul applies this prophecy to believing Jews and gentiles who are made the people and the sons of God,¹⁴⁹ and comprehends that they are fulfilled in the calling of the gentiles.¹⁵⁰ The promises to Israel are not merely employed to gentiles. The church is the new and renewed Israel. Hence, it is likely that Paul considers the promises that God made to Israel as being fulfilled in the church of Jesus Christ. Consequently, the church of Christ is the new people of God.¹⁵¹ It is possible that Paul foresaw a fulfillment of the promise made to Abraham, in which all people are blessed in him. Commenting on the inclusion of the gentiles as recipients of God’s promise to Abraham, Richard B. Hays maintains that it is “thoroughly consistent with the character and purposes of the God to whom prophetic Scripture bears witness.”¹⁵² For this reason, Paul demonstrates that his mission to the nations is scriptural fulfillment. Paul’s mission to reach the nations is not his own invention, but it is

¹⁴⁹Scott, *Paul and the Nations*, 133. See further, James M. Scott, *Adoptions as Sons of God: An Exegetical Investigation into the Background of ΥΙΟΘΕΣΙΑ in the Pauline Corpus*, WUNT 2.48 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1992), 195-213.

¹⁵⁰Schreiner, *Romans*, 528; Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 38.

¹⁵¹Schreiner, *Romans*, 528. Mounce, *Romans*, 203.

¹⁵²Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 120.

grounded in God's promises made in the Scriptures and in the fulfillment of the promises of God's eternal redemptive plan in Christ.

Paul's final passage in this connection comes from the end of the letter-body in Romans 15:7-13¹⁵³ and brings to light a series of OT passages that bear scriptural witness to the inclusion of the gentiles in God's promise of salvation, along with the Jews. The task of Paul's missionary calling is bringing the nations, both Jews and gentiles, together as one people of God by preaching the gospel of God. These OT passages obviously exemplify Paul's vision and fulfillment for a church constituted of Jews and gentiles glorifying God together.¹⁵⁴ The following paragraph¹⁵⁵ sums up this major concern of his worldwide mission.

Therefore accept one another, just as Christ also has accepted you, to the glory of God. For I say, Christ has become a servant of the circumcision on behalf of the truth of God, in order to confirm the promises to the fathers, and that the Gentiles may glorify God for *his* mercy, just as it is written,
“Because of this, I will praise you among the Gentiles,

¹⁵³Some scholars maintains that the passage suggests the conclusion to the only hortatory section, that is, 12:1-15:6 (e.g., J. A. Ziesler, *The Meaning of Righteousness in Paul: A Linguistic and Theological Enquiry*, SNTSMS 20 [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972], 336-37), or to the entire letter (e.g., James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, WBC, vol. 38B [Dallas: Word Books, 1988], 844-45; Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 70), or both (e.g., Schreiner, *Romans*, 753). Schreiner, however, maintains that the passage of 15:7-13 functions as the conclusion of 14:1-15:6 because the call of v. 7 to mutual acceptance aptly concludes (note *διὸ*, therefore) the exhortations to the “strong” and the “weak” from 14:1-15:6. See also Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 2:739. Whichever position one may take, this passage definitely alludes to God's faithfulness to his promises to Israel (see v. 8; cf. also 1:2; 3:1-8; 9:4-5; 11:1-2, 28), and the inclusion of gentiles in the people of God, which is one of the major themes that have dominated Romans (see v. 9; cf. also 1:5, 16; 3:21-31; 4:12-17; 9:24-25, 30; 10:9-13; 11:28-30; 15:8-12; 16-18; 16:26). See Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 873-74. Cf. Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 384-85.

¹⁵⁴Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 71.

¹⁵⁵Leander E. Keck (Christology, Soteriology, and the Praise of God [Romans 15:7-13], in *The Conversation Continues: Studies in Paul and John: In Honor of J. Louis Martyn*, ed. R. T. Fortna and B. R. Gaventa (Nashville: Abingdon, 1990), 92-93) considers that 15:8-12 come from the pre-Pauline tradition. Paul inserted the scriptural citations with some editorial correction to v. 8. For a critique, see Schreiner, *Romans*, 753, n. 1.

and I will sing praise to your name.” (Ps 18:49; 2 Sam 22:50)
And again it says,
“Rejoice, Gentiles, with his people.” (Deut 32:43)
And again,
“Praise the Lord, all the Gentiles,
and let all the peoples praise him.” (Ps 117:1)
And again Isaiah says,
“The root of Jesse will come,
even the one who rises to rule over the Gentiles;
in him the Gentiles will put their hope.” (Isa 11:10)
Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you
may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Paul’s usage of these OT passages bolsters this contention. The interpreters of Romans note that he quotes from the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms (Writings), and—in each case—the catchword “gentiles” (ἔθνη) or “peoples” (λαοί) connects them together.¹⁵⁶ This illustrates that the unity of Jews and gentiles is manifested in worship, and in praising God together. This united praise fulfills God’s ultimate purpose of honoring and praising God among all the nations.¹⁵⁷ Thus, Käsemann remarks, “The Old Testament foreshadowed this message. The recipients of the letter must recognize this agreement with Scripture. An apology could hardly have a more magnificent conclusion.”¹⁵⁸ The fulfillment of this scriptural vision at the conclusion correctly connects the letter opening with Paul’s affirmation of the scriptural promise of the gospel (1:2), for which Paul was called to proclaim among the nations. Hence, “Gentile-embracing righteousness, proclaimed in Paul’s gospel, really is ‘promised beforehand through his prophets in holy texts’ (Rom 1:2), and Paul has successfully made his case in defense of the justice of

¹⁵⁶Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 705.

¹⁵⁷Schreiner, *Romans*, 752.

¹⁵⁸Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 387.

God.”¹⁵⁹ That is why these OT scriptural references are an appropriate climax of the letter’s argument.

The Goal of Paul’s Mission: Salvation for All

Paul’s goal¹⁶⁰ is preaching to and reaching as many people as possible—that is, nations—both Jews and gentiles. Bringing nations to the obedience of faith through preaching the gospel of Christ for His glory was his ultimate aim. He wants to preach “to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish.” He shows his readiness to preach the gospel even to Romans. He wants to strengthen the faith of the Roman Christians. He has proclaimed the good news of Jesus Christ “from Jerusalem and *traveling* around as far as Illyricum.” He wants to go to the West, specifically to Spain, for preaching the gospel. His general principle was “to proclaim the gospel where Christ has not been named.” He fulfills his long desire to deliver the contribution to the saints in Jerusalem. The goal of mission is bringing Jews and gentiles to God’s worship and praise.

Paul makes his missionary objective quite plain in the letter opening and closing. He delineates his missionary goal in 1:5 as bringing about “the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations,”¹⁶¹ which D. B. Garlington claims as “a programmatic statement of the main purpose of the letter to the Romans.”¹⁶² Three

¹⁵⁹Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 71.

¹⁶⁰This topic has been regularly mentioned in the course of the above discussion. This discussion will be provided in summary form to avoid repetition.

¹⁶¹For exegetical details, see Chapter 2, 56-60.

¹⁶²D. B. Garlington, “The Obedience of Faith in the Letter to the Romans, Part I: The Meaning of ὑπακοή πίστεως (Rom 1:5; 16:26),” *WTJ* 52 (1990): 201.

components in this statement list the goal of his gospel proclamation: (1) “to bring about the obedience of faith,” (2) “among all the nations,” and (3) for the sake of his name.” Each one of these phrases characterizes, “the totality of Paul’s missionary endeavors.”¹⁶³ This is repeated verbatim in the letter closing in Romans 16:26 and echoed in 15:18. The aim of his missionary preaching is bringing “the obedience of faith” among the hearers. These words convey the missionary thrust of Paul’s call to the gentiles.¹⁶⁴ God demands that the hearers of the gospel preaching believe in the Son of God, which is the content of Paul’s message (1:3-4; 15:18; 16:26; cf. 2 Cor 9:13). Therefore, the gospel that focuses on the Son of God is intended to bring all nations to the obedience of faith. The gospel, when it is accepted in faith, can be identified as an act of obedience.¹⁶⁵ For instance, according to Romans 10:16, “But not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah said, ‘Lord, who has believed our report?’” Consequently, disobedience could be defined as failure to believe. The parallel reference to obedience in 15:18 describes it as “the obedience of the gentiles.” Hence, “obedience of faith” cannot be confined to one act obedience. This explains that obedience demands changed lives,¹⁶⁶ which Paul elaborates in Romans 12:1-15:6. Thus, such belief can never be separated from obedience.

Paul preaches the gospel to gain the conversion of the gentiles. Moreover, as James M. Scott maintains,

¹⁶³Ibid., 203.

¹⁶⁴Schreiner, *Romans*, 34.

¹⁶⁵It is neither polemical (D. B. Garlington, *The Obedience of Faith: A Pauline Phrase in Historical Context*, WUNT 38 [Tübingen: Mohr, 1991], 253-55), nor emphasizing unity between Jews and gentiles (Robert Jewett, “Ecumenical Theology for the Sake of Mission: Romans 1:1-17+15:14-16:24,” in *Pauline Theology*, vol. 3, *Romans*, ed. David M. Hay and Elizabeth Johnson [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995], 94).

¹⁶⁶Schreiner, *Romans*, 35.

Indirectly, the goal of Paul's mission to the nations is the salvation of Israel, whether by making his fellow Jews jealous and thus saving some of them (Rom 11:11, 13-14) or by contributing to the coming in the full number of the nations, whereby all Israel will be saved when the Deliverer comes from Zion (11:25-26).¹⁶⁷

Hence, the purpose of his missionary preaching is bringing Jews and gentiles together in the praise and worship of God. The ultimate goal is not the inclusion of the gentiles in God's people, however, because Paul calls all peoples to the obedience of faith "for the sake of His name." At the conclusion of the letter-body, Paul writes that the Jews and gentiles will ultimately unite together in God's praise and worship.

The effect of Paul's gospel would not be good news if redemption depended on the strength and ability of human beings. As a result, his gospel emphasizes that God saves his people in and through His Son, Jesus Christ. Humans are expected to respond to the gospel in faith, and are called to stay true to it.

Summary

Paul begins his letter by emphasizing the world mission, which he has partly accomplished and has continued to spread among the nations. His missionary task is preaching the gospel worldwide. Paul's missionary commission mainly focuses on preaching the gospel and reaching the nations. In his opening statement of Romans, Paul states that he was set apart for "the gospel of God" (Rom 1:1; cf. 15:16). The term "gospel" (Greek *εὐαγγέλιον*) has two-fold significance: first, it refers to "the message of God's saving work in Christ's atoning work," and second, it expresses "the act of proclamation." It is not the apostle Paul's invention, though. He was making use of

¹⁶⁷Scott, *Paul and the Nations*, 132. Note that the jealousy of the *ἔθνη* by the Jews is seen here in a positive affirmation.

terminology that was common to early Christianity. It was already a technical term in early Christian vocabulary prior to Paul's ministry signifying the authoritative message of Jesus Christ. He identifies his missionary task as that of an apostle. This means that Paul has been called and sent by God to preaching the gospel.

Paul informs that the gospel was already proclaimed among God's people in Israel in the Hebrew Scriptures, referring to the gospel "which He [God] promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures" (Rom 1:2). The gospel is God's "promise," which He presented in those prophetic writings "concerning His [God's] Son." Hence, the content of the gospel is about God's Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, from the seed of David in His humanity and the appointed Son of God in power by the resurrection from the dead (1:2-4). The gospel is defined as "the power of God" (δύναμις θεοῦ) that results in salvation for all humanity (the Jew and the Greek, 1:16). In addition, Paul shows that in the same gospel God's righteousness is revealed. (cf. 3:21-31). The gospel of God's righteousness is God's saving activity that focusses on the basis upon which believers enter into a relationship with God through His Son's atoning work.

Paul was commissioned to preach the gospel to the gentiles/nations. He speaks of himself as apostle to the ἔθνη. His mission is bringing about the obedience of faith among the nations. Despite his special calling as missionary to the gentiles, Paul was obligated to preach the gospel to both Jews and gentiles. He frequently employs the Greek term ἔθνη to mean "gentiles" as opposed to Jews in his epistles. However, in the context of the OT citations from LXX, he always makes use of ἔθνη to mean "nations" or "people groups" of the world outside the people of Israel. Paul himself claims that he has been particularly commissioned to preach the gospel to the gentiles. He attributes his call

and conversion to the Damascus road experience. Unlike the twelve apostles, Paul's apostleship explains the distinguishing character of his missionary commission, which is directed to the worldwide mission.

Therefore, the inclusion of the gentiles in Paul's mission theology is quite significant and the Scripture is the witness to this fact. Paul employs the *Abrahamic promise* in the OT Scriptures to bolster his argument. Paul demonstrates that Abraham, the fountainhead of the Jewish people, was justified by faith, apart from works and circumcision; the gentiles will be justified by faith alone, as well. In addition, he shows that OT passages bear witness of the Scriptures to the inclusion of the gentiles into God's promise of salvation along with the Jews, as well. Paul's task of missionary calling is bringing the nations, both Jews and gentiles, together as one people of God by preaching the gospel of God. The Jews and gentiles will ultimately come together in praise and worship of God

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Summary

At the outset, this study assumed that the main reason for Paul to write this great epistle to the Romans was his mission to the nations. His primary concern was world mission, which is additionally God's eternal plan for the world as it is repeatedly declared in the OT Scriptures. When Paul wrote this epistle, he wanted the Roman believers to share this very concern with him. This assumption is based on the fact that Paul begins and concludes his letter to the Romans with the gospel theme, which he explicates in the body of the letter that is addressed to both *the Jews and the nations*. And this same gospel is necessary to preach for their salvation, without any discrimination. Hence, it seems that preaching the gospel to all the nations of the world (inclusive of all peoples, i.e., both Jews and nations) is the foundational and central motif of Paul's mission "theo-logy." This study thus is set to search for the purpose of Paul's letter to the Romans. Any attempt to respond to his goal of world mission in the letter must answer the following questions: "What evidence/factors in the letter could be brought together to draw the conclusion that he had a missionary objective for writing Romans?" What is the foundation for his mission to the nations in Romans? What is Paul's mission in Romans, and how does he understand and appropriate this mission?" These are the three primary issues that this study has attempted to examine to provide strong evidence for his mission

to the nations.

In light of these questions, this study focused first on examining the epistolary framework of the letter: the letter opening (1:1-17) and the letter closing (15:14-16:27). The theme “gospel,” both in its noun (εὐαγγέλιον, 1:1; 1:9; 1:16; 2:16; 15:16; 15:19; 16:25) and cognate verb (εὐαγγελίζω, 1:15; 15:20) forms, and the gospel’s correlated terms “apostle” (1:1; 1:5; 11:13) basically appear in the frame. Closely associated words, like δύναμις (power/strength, 1:4, 16; 15:19; 16:25; cf. 1:20; 8:39; 9:17; 15:13) and ἀποκάλυψις (revelation, 1:17, 18; 2:5; 8:18; 16:25)—and closely linked terms—like ὑπακοή πίστεως (obedience of faith, 1:5; cf. 15:18; 16:19, 26) and ἔθνη (nations/gentiles, 1:5; 11:22-25; 15 passim; 16:4, 26)—are restricted to the frame.

Besides this connection, Paul highlights his divine apostolic commission and authority for preaching the gospel of God. He shares with the Roman believers the conviction that God’s Son, Jesus Christ, is the heart of the gospel, who was promised long before in the Scriptures. He was born in the flesh and died for all, and was exalted through the resurrection to being Lord of all. This is the gospel that Paul was set apart and called to preach. Paul claims, however, that he was specifically “called” by the risen Christ to be an apostle to the gentiles. He was called to preach the same gospel “to bring about the obedience of faith among all the nations,” including his readers, the Roman believers, and even the Jews. He hoped to strengthen the faith of the Roman believers, so that they would participate in his global mission. Paul reminds them that he is obligated to preach to everyone: to Greeks and barbarians; to the wise and unwise; and even to his Jewish audience, as well. Paul asserts that the gospel, which he is commissioned to preach, is the saving power of God “to everyone who has faith, to the Jew first and also to

the Greek” (1:16). This gospel reveals God’s righteousness, which is His saving activity in Christ’s work for all humanity, which Paul elaborates in the body of the letter.

When it comes to the letter closing, Paul skillfully demonstrates that he anticipates the same missionary purpose in the letter closing, as is evidenced in the letter opening. The common theme of preaching the gospel among all the nations ties them together; it is a vision for global mission. Paul further reaffirms that the goal of his commission to the gospel is the “obedience of all the nations.” He declares that he has partly fulfilled that commission through preaching and planting churches in the East (15:19). Therefore, Paul plans to move further in the West because his guiding principle is preaching the gospel in new areas, where it has not yet been preached (15:20), for ensuring the inclusion of the nations in the new people of God. At the end of his letter, which is known as the doxology, Paul not only provides a carefully constructed summary of the major themes of the letter, but affirms his missionary commission to preach to the nations. Consequently, Paul states that the gospel he has been called to preach is the mystery of God’s power, once hidden and now revealed through gospel proclamation. This pertains to the inclusion of the nations among God’s people. The object of gospel proclamation is summoning all nations to respond to the obedience of faith. This intentional recapitulation of the principal themes illustrates that Paul’s primary purpose for writing the letter is proclaiming the gospel to all nations, and bringing about their obedience of faith.

Having examined the framework of the letter and established Paul’s purpose for composing it, the writer now turns to God’s identity as the foundation for Paul’s mission to the nations. This establishes further evidence of Paul’s missionary purpose for

writing the letter. God is central to Paul's theo-logy of mission. Paul sees the statements about God relating to God's character, His acts, and His purposes to be always linked with his own conviction with respect to Christ and His atoning work for all people. Besides employing explicit God-languages that includes his usage of *θεός*, he employs "descriptive statements" concerning God, which clearly refer to Him. Paul utilizes "divine passives" as well, implying the action of God. For Paul, God's true identity is bound by "the action of God" on behalf of His people. God's being and His acts are closely connected from the creation of the world. God's identity can best be explained by reference to what He does. This characterization of God by His action is a unique feature, which is distinctively Christian and separates Christianity from all other world religions.

In Romans, God's action plays a significant role in the manifestation of His identity, which is derived from OT promises, particularly those that are associated with the Exodus and Abraham's stories. Paul finds that God's action through the atoning work of Jesus fulfills these OT stories. He stresses the solidarity of both Jews and gentiles with regard to sin, and God's impartial judgment for everyone. (1:18-3:20). Jews do not have any benefit compared with gentiles for having the law or circumcision. For this reason, all people require salvation, which is available only by God's action through Christ's work. The work of Jesus defines the gospel and is revealed in God's righteousness. Paul demonstrates the purpose of God's scriptural promises. His promises to Abraham were intended for the gentiles' inclusion in the people of God without any distinction, apart from the works of the law, and apart from circumcision. Jews and gentiles are justified by faith alone—not by observing the law.

The Jewish *Shema* speaks of God's "oneness": that is, "God is One." Paul

derives from this that God is the God of the Jews, along with the gentiles. The One God of the Jews is the God of the whole world, including the gentiles. The One God justifies, both Jews and gentiles, in one and the same way by Christ's atoning work, and through faith in Him. Therefore, the *Shema*' clearly demonstrates that justification by faith is for all people, both Jews and gentiles, circumcised and uncircumcised, without any discrimination. This identity of God as the One God, who justifies both Jews and gentiles, signifies that Paul's mission extends to all nations and peoples of the entire world.

This One God, who justifies the Jews and the gentiles, is the same God who justifies the ungodly. He is the God who gives life to the dead—the description by which Paul characterizes the same God “who raised Jesus from the dead.” God's action in Christ's death and resurrection fulfill the promise of universal blessing that Abraham received (Gen 12:1-3; 15:6; 17:5). God's acts in Christ portray the gospel of God, for which Paul was called to preach to the nations. God's promise is fulfilled in this gospel and, by its proclamation, the nations come to know the One and only true God; everyone enters into His relationship by faith. Consequently, Paul's identification of God in His saving activities offers the evidence that there is only One God, and just one way to come to Him. Paul received a unique understanding of the implications of God's promises to Abraham and His acts in Christ for the inclusion of the gentiles into the people of God. Hence, the identification of God—in His saving activity by the redemptive work of Jesus, forms the basic foundation for Paul's universal mission in Romans.

In an effort to ascertain Paul's purpose for writing this letter to the Roman believers, this dissertation has maintained that Paul was entrusted with the missionary

task of preaching the gospel on a global basis, and his commission mainly concentrated on reaching all nations of the world. The term “gospel” basically has a twofold significance: First, it refers to “the message of God’s saving work in Christ’s atoning work” and, second, it expresses “the act of proclamation.” Thus, the focus of every act of missionary gospel proclamation is on God’s Son, Jesus Christ; His death and resurrection; and His lordship, indicating the universal significance of His message. In his preaching, Paul consistently emphasized God’s saving work accomplished in and through Jesus Christ, God’s crucified and risen Son. Paul identifies his missionary task as that of an apostle, which means that he was called and sent by God to preach the amazing message of the gospel worldwide.

Further, the gospel is God’s “promise,” which was declared in the prophetic writings “concerning His [God’s] Son.” Therefore, the content of the gospel concerns God’s Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, from the seed of David in His humanity and the appointed Son of God in power by the resurrection from the dead (1:2-4). The gospel is defined as “the power of God” (*δύναμις θεοῦ*), which results in salvation for all humanity (the Jew first, as well as the Greek, 1:16). In addition, Paul shows that God’s righteousness is revealed in the same gospel (cf. 3:21-31). The gospel of God’s righteousness is God’s saving activity, which focusses on the basis upon which believers enter into a relationship with God through His Son’s atoning work that is for everyone who has faith.

Paul’s missionary task was not only preaching the gospel but also reaching it to the gentiles/nations, too. He speaks of himself as the apostle to the *ἔθνη* (11:13). His mission is bringing about the obedience of faith among the nations. Paul felt an

obligation to preach the gospel to both Jews and gentiles. The Greek term ἔθνη is translated to mean “gentiles” as opposed to Jews. In the context of OT citations from LXX, though, Paul always makes use of ἔθνη to mean “nations” or “people groups” of the world outside the people of Israel. Paul himself attests that he has been particularly commissioned to preach the gospel to the nations. He attributes his call and conversion to the Damascus road experience. Paul’s missionary commission to preach the gospel among all the nations is the distinguishing character of his apostleship.

For this reason, the inclusion of the gentiles in Paul’s mission theology is quite significant, and the Scripture bears witness to this fact. In support of his argument, Paul employs the *Abrahamic promise* from OT Scriptures. He demonstrates that Abraham, the patriarch of the Jewish people, was justified by faith, apart from works and circumcision; so also, the gentiles are justified by faith alone. The OT Scriptures bear witness to the inclusion of the gentiles in God’s salvation promise, along with the Jews. The task of Paul’s missionary calling is bringing the nations, both Jews and gentiles, together as one people of God by preaching the gospel of God. The ultimate goal of Paul’s missionary commission is joining the Jews and the gentiles together in the praise and worship of God

Conclusion and Relevance of Paul’s Mission to the Contemporary Churches

This dissertation makes several contributions for the global mission in Romans and its relevance to the contemporary mission of the churches. The most significant is my argument that Paul’s goal throughout is worldwide missionary concern: preaching the

gospel of God and reaching the nations with the gospel.¹ Numerous evidences have been presented under the three main topics: The epistolary framework of the letter, God's action in and through Christ, which is His identity, as the foundation for Paul's mission to the nations, and Paul's missionary task of his calling and commission to preach the gospel to the nations, including Jews, provide a strong case for Paul's purpose of global mission in Romans. Each of the chapters demonstrates that Paul's worldwide missionary concern is central to Paul's goal and purpose of his letter. Racism (in the West), casteism (in India), prejudice, and discrimination based on colors, economic status, ethnicity, and nationalities, in varying forms and to various degrees, have been a plague on humanity for thousands of years. Paul emphasizes that God does not show partiality or favoritism (Rom 2:11; cf. also Deut 10:17; Acts 10:34; Eph6:9). He is committed to include every people group, or ethnic entity, or nations in his mission as part of God's promises in the Scriptures. (See Gen 12:3; Isa 19:18-25; 49:6; Dan 7:14-27.)

Hence, Paul, whom God separated for "the gospel of God," is not ashamed of proclaiming it to anyone. Paul is obligated to all people. The gospel is God's power for every human being, including the Jew first. God gave only one gospel for all. There would have been one gospel for the Jews and for the gentiles if Paul had failed in demonstrating this truth. One gospel thus has one solution to the problem for humanity because the gospel is God's power for salvation to "everyone" who believes.² In making

¹E.g., Rom 1:5, 13-15, 16-17; 3:21-31; 4:1-25; 9:24-25, 30; 10:13-17; 11:28-30; 15:7-13, 15-16; 16:25-27.

²Leander E. Keck, "What Makes Romans Tick?" in *Pauline Theology*. vol. 3, *Romans*, ed. David M. Hay and Elizabeth Johnson (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 24.

his case for the one gospel, Paul places all peoples and nations on the same level. Today's church and Christian missions have a specific mission—which is 'the proclamation of the gospel' to all nations of the world without any discrimination in the context of growing globalization, and cultural pluralism—besides other responsibilities, such as worshiping, teaching, nurturing, caring, etc.

Furthermore, this same gospel expresses the 'solidarity' of sinners, both Jews and gentiles: In view of God's revelation in Jesus Christ, no one can escape God's judgment, because God's righteousness consists of both His saving and judging righteousness in the same gospel (1:16-18). This means that the true preaching of the gospel of the righteousness of God must not be distanced from the preaching of God's wrath and judgment. Hence, a church that is active in mission and evangelism does not discharge itself from the solidarity of all people. Missionary work presupposes that Christians remind themselves of the sin and bondage from which they have been liberated and redeemed³ that unites us together in the worship of the one true and living God.

Second, this dissertation argues that God's true identity is central to Paul's mission to the nations. He preached among the nations that serve idols and images, which are completely different from God, revealed in the OT Scripture. Paul demonstrates that, unlike in other religions, the God of the Bible is not only the divine being, which encompasses divine attributes and natures, but He is the One who acts. He is not a static

³Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Early Christian Mission*, vol. 2, *Paul and the Early Church* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press; Leicester: Apollos, 2004), 1472.

mute idol. This is unique to the Christian identity of God revealed fully and only in Jesus Christ. His action is the vehicle of His identity. In Pauline letters, specifically in Romans, Paul shows that the action of God is fundamental to the manifestation of His identity. For instance, He is the God who justifies the ungodly, who is the same God who raised Jesus from the dead. In today's world peoples need a God who is not a mute idol, but the One who acts for the salvation of the world. Thus, a church that is engaged in preaching the gospel can begin with the proclamation of God in today's context, especially, in the increasingly pluralistic context.

Third, I argue that Paul's understanding of mission based on Scripture (OT) furnishes the right understanding of God for preaching the gospel in the present context in which the true identity of God has been distorted. The witness of the scriptures is overwhelming whether it is about the gospel or about the inclusion of all people groups in the people of God. Thus, a church can be dynamic and effective in mission when it submits to the scriptures for its proclamation of the gospel.

Finally, it has been indicated throughout that Paul's mission finds its fulfillment in His (God's) Son, Jesus Christ—the only true identity of God—who was promised in the Scripture, and it is through Him that 'all nations' will have the true knowledge of God and will be justified by Him for the salvation of all.

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ABSTRACT

THE PREACHING OF “THE GOSPEL OF GOD”: PAUL’S MISSION TO THE NATIONS IN ROMANS

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This research investigates the preaching of the gospel of God as Paul’s mission to the nations in the letter to the Romans. Chapter 1, which explains the topic and its importance in the mission context, sets the stage for the main body of research.

Chapter 2 explores the epistolary frame of the letter and contends that Paul basically had a missionary purpose for writing the Romans. The letter opening and closing affirm this divine commission and authority for preaching the gospel to all the nations. Paul skillfully establishes the universal significance of the gospel he was called to preach..

Chapter 3 examines God’s identity in Paul’s mission to the nations. God is the foundation and starting point for his mission. Paul frequently uses descriptive statements regarding God’s acts. He has made it plain that God’s true identity is bounded by His actions for His people. These statements clearly demonstrate that the biblical God is not only the divine being, who encompasses divine attributes and nature. He is additionally the One who acts, which forms the distinct Christian identity of God, revealed fully and only in Jesus.

Chapter 4 investigates Paul’s mission in the context of his missionary function.

Paul was commissioned to preach the gospel, and—specifically—his call was to be an apostle to the gentiles; he was set apart for “the gospel of God.” The gospel’s authority lies with God, who owns it and originated it. The preaching of the gospel concerns God's Son, a promise God made in the Old Testament, which is now fulfilled in the incarnate, crucified, risen Christ. Paul’s missionary calling was bringing the nations, both Jews and gentiles, together as one people of God by preaching the gospel. The ultimate goal of Paul’s missionary task was joining the Jews and the gentiles in praise and worship of God.

It is evident from this research that Paul’s calling and commission were serving as a missionary to the nations. This calling was an integral part of God's redemptive plan, which was marked by the promise of blessing for the nations. Thus, Paul’s worldwide mission underscores Romans’ purpose.

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