

The Purest Gospel

Romans 1:1-17



Apostle Paul (~ 5 – 67 A.D.)
By Andrei Rublev (1410)

The Purest Gospel Introduction



The Purest Gospel Introduction



This epistle is really the chief part of the New Testament, and is truly the purest gospel. It is worthy not only that every Christian should know it word for word, by heart, but also that he should occupy himself with it every day, as the daily bread of the soul ...

– Martin Luther

The Purest Gospel Introduction



We can never read it or ponder over it too much; for the more we deal with it, the more precious it becomes and the better it tastes.

– Martin Luther

The Purest Gospel Introduction

- Ambiguous Origins of the Roman Church:
 - No clear historical record of founding by apostles.
 - In **Acts 2:10**, “visitors from Rome” were present at Pentecost.
 - Many passed through the empire’s capital.

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The Christian community in Rome probably owed its foundation to the work of Christian travelers, immigrants, and merchants, some of whom may have been present in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost (cf. Acts 2:10) and were therefore either Jews or proselytes.

*– Colin Kruse,
Melbourne School of Theology*

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- The earliest Christians in Rome were probably Jewish or Gentile converts to Judaism.
- In A.D. 49, however, Jews were expelled from the city.

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As the Jews were making constant disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus, he [Claudius] expelled them from Rome.

*– Suetonius, ~115 A.D.
The Life of Claudius*

*Woodcut illustration from
the Nuremberg Chronicle, 15th Century*

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- **Acts 18:2** (ESV)

Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. ² And he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome.

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- In A.D. 54, the Emperor Claudius died and the edict lapsed.
- Jews began to return to what was now a Gentile church.
- Hoping to later visit, Paul writes to this blended church, thoroughly explaining his gospel.

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Most contemporary readers of Romans ... perhaps have difficulty imagining the situation that Paul and the early Christians faced. The Messiah promised in the Old Testament ... had come. But he had come in a way entirely unexpected ... Jesus had died ignominiously on a Roman cross ...

*– Douglas Moo,
Wheaton Graduate School*

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And the movement that he inaugurated quickly spread from its Jewish roots to embrace Samaritans (Acts 8) and then gentiles (Acts 10). Paul ... embarked on extensive missionary travels, the result being the founding of many churches filled mainly with gentiles.

*– Douglas Moo,
Wheaton Graduate School*

The Purest Gospel Introduction

- Paul's goals:
 - To introduce himself to the Roman church in preparation for later mission work.
 - To encourage unity among Jewish and Gentile believers.
 - To thoroughly explain the gospel he preaches as the means to both of the above.

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Our Plan for Romans:

1. The Purest Gospel 1:1-17
2. Our Need for Grace 1:18 – 3:20
3. God's Gift of Grace 3:21 – 8:39
4. God's Gracious Plan 9:1 – 11:36
5. Life Lived by Grace 12:1 – 15:13

- Part 5 will consist of 7 messages.

The Purest Gospel Romans 1:1-17



The Purest Gospel Romans 1:1-17

- **1:1** Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God
- Three components of Paul's self-perception:
 1. A "servant" or "slave" of Jesus Christ
 2. Called to be "an apostle"
 3. "Set apart for the gospel of God"

The Purest Gospel Romans 1:1-17

[Paul] is a servant of Christ Jesus. The word here translated 'servant' means 'slave'. Although the idea of being a slave arouses a feeling of repugnance, this is how Paul wants to be known. He is not alone in this ...

*– David M. Kasali, Bilingual Christian
University of the Congo*



The Purest Gospel Romans 1:1-17

The same term is used in the OT to refer to Moses, David and the prophets ... Like these other servants of God, Paul has committed himself to total subjection, obedience and devotion to Jesus Christ and to serving him as his slave.

*– David M. Kasali, Bilingual Christian
University of the Congo*



The Purest Gospel **Romans 1:1-17**

- An “**apostle**” in one NT sense is a designated messenger, something like a missionary in today’s church.
- But there is another sense in which and “**apostle**” is more authoritative – and this is what Paul means here.
- These men were chosen specifically by the Lord to provide the foundation for the church.

The Purest Gospel Romans 1:1-17

- Ephesians 2:19-21 (ESV)

¹⁹ So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, ²⁰ built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, ²¹ in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord.

The Purest Gospel Romans 1:1-17

- Finally, Paul is “set apart for the gospel of God”
- This further amplifies what Paul means by being “called.”
- God’s purpose for Paul is being realized in his apostleship.

The Purest Gospel Romans 1:1-17



Paul, as a “called apostle,” has been set aside by God for a special purpose in God’s plan for history.

*– Douglas Moo,
Wheaton Graduate School*

The Purest Gospel **Romans 1:1-17**

- **1:1-5** the gospel of God ... concerning his Son, who was descended from David ... the Son of God ... Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom we have received grace ...
- The gospel is about Jesus.
- Through him we receive grace.

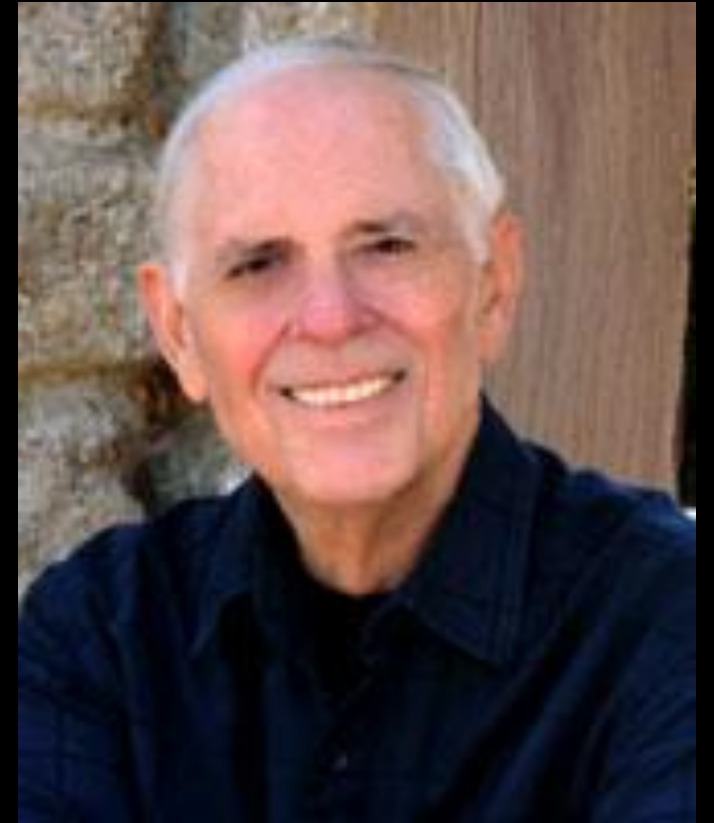
The Purest Gospel **Romans 1:1-17**

- Key Concept: **Grace**
- Nowhere in the Bible is **grace** more important than in the book of **Romans**.
- The word **grace** appears **21 times** in **18 verses**, more than in any other book.

The Purest Gospel Romans 1:1-17

Thomas Oden, in his *Classic Christianity*, tells us,

Grace means unmerited favor. To affirm that God is gracious is to affirm that God does not deal with creatures on the basis of their works, merit, or deserving but rather out of abundant divine compassion. It is through grace that God's mercy is freely given precisely to penitent sinners.



The Purest Gospel **Romans 1:1-17**

Wayne Grudem, in his *Systematic Theology*, defines *grace* as:

God's goodness toward those who deserve only punishment.



The Purest Gospel Romans 1:1-17

- Key phrase: “the obedience of faith” (1:5, 16:26)
- Romans 1:1-5 (ESV)

¹ Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, ... ³ concerning his Son, ...
⁵ through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations.

The Purest Gospel Romans 1:1-17

- Paul does not see **faith** and **obedience** as rivals.
- There is an obedience that belongs to genuine faith.
- Faith is more basic, but it leads to obedience.
- Jesus, according to Paul, intended Paul's apostleship to bring about *the obedience of faith*.

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- 1:7 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
- Aaron and his sons spoke a blessing to the people of Israel.

The Purest Gospel **Romans 1:1-17**

- **1:7** Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
- Aaron and his sons spoke a blessing to the people of Israel.
- **Numbers 6:24-26** (ESV)
 - ²⁴ The LORD bless you and keep you;
 - ²⁵ the LORD make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you;
 - ²⁶ the LORD lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.

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- **1:13-15** I have often intended to come to you ... I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.
- Paul has had an extensive ministry in the Eastern Mediterranean.
- He now wants to expand to the west.
- Rome, the capital of the world, is the ideal place to start.

The Purest Gospel Romans 1:1-17

- Key verses: **Romans 1:16-17** (ESV)

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. ¹⁷ For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, “The righteous shall live by faith.”

The Purest Gospel Romans 1:1-17



When the good news about Jesus is preached, God's own power is unleashed. That power is capable of "saving" anyone who believes ... First, this salvation is not only negative (saved from sin and death) but also positive (saved to restored fellowship with God).

*– Douglas Moo,
Wheaton Graduate School*

The Purest Gospel Romans 1:1-17

- **1:17** from faith for faith (ESV)
- This is not an easy phrase to translate.
- Literally it is “out of faith for faith.”
- (NIV) “by faith from first to last”
- (NLT) “from start to finish by faith”

The Purest Gospel Conclusions



The Purest Gospel **Conclusions**

- The church in Rome had Jewish origins and founders with now largely gentile membership.
- This reflected the overall situation in the early church.

The Purest Gospel **Conclusions**

- Key concept: **God's grace**
 - Unmerited favor, freely given to penitent sinners.
 - God's goodness toward those who deserve only punishment.

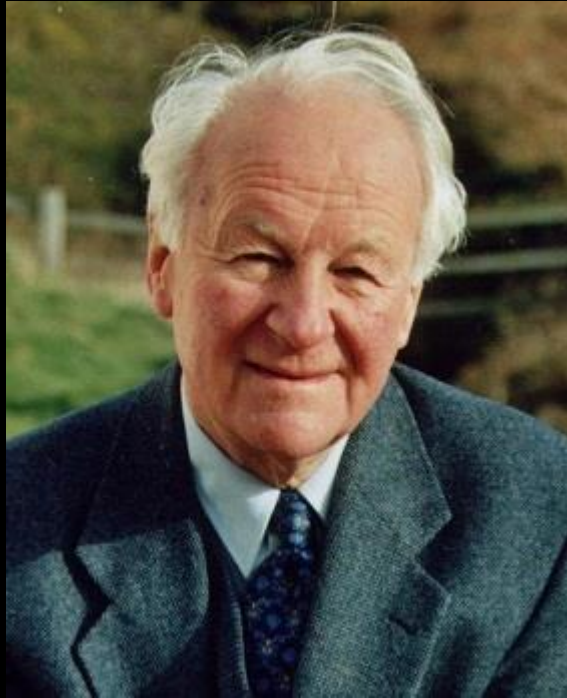
The Purest Gospel Conclusions

- Key phrase: “the obedience of faith” (1:5, 16:26)
- Faith and obedience are *related – not rival* ideas.
- The gospel brings about **faith** which leads to **obedience**.
- This was Christ’s intention for Paul’s apostleship.

The Purest Gospel Conclusions

- Paul's goals:
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What we have to share with others is neither a miscellany of human speculations, nor one more religion to add to the rest, nor really a religion at all. It is rather the gospel of God, God's own good news for a lost world.

*– John Stott (1921 – 2011),
All Souls Church, London*

The Purest Gospel Conclusions

- Key verses: **Romans 1:16-17** (ESV)

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