

Title: Romans 1:2-17

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Session 3

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Abstract

This lecture by Dr. Craig Keener analyzes Romans 1:2-17, examining how Paul frames the gospel as the fulfillment of Old Testament promises centered on Jesus Christ's resurrection. It explores Paul's apostolic calling to bring about the obedience of faith among all nations, particularly the Gentiles. The session details the key theological concepts of the righteousness of God and justification, presenting them as a transformative divine gift rather than a forensic legal fiction. Finally, it outlines the thesis of Romans, highlighting the gospel as God's power for salvation and eternal life for everyone who has faith.

Outline

I. Introduction (Romans 1:2-7)

A. The Gospel Promised in Advance

1. Promised through the Old Testament prophets
2. Mediation indicates divine inspiration of the Holy Scriptures
3. Paul expounds and helps understand Old Testament themes

B. The Subject of the Gospel: God's Son, Jesus Christ

1. According to the flesh:
 - a. Descendant of David (ethnically)
2. According to the Spirit of holiness:
 - a. Openly declared Son of God by resurrection
3. Exaltation and enthronement:

- a. Crowned with power
- b. Linked to the Spirit and resurrection

C. Paul's Apostolic Calling (Romans 1:5-6)

1. Greek rhetoric style (period)
 - a. Syntax circles back to calling
2. Use of "we" (epistolary "we")
 - a. Identifies with other apostles
 - b. Focuses on the office of apostleship
3. Grace of apostleship:
 - a. Divine empowerment for ministry
4. Purpose of calling:
 - a. To bring about the "obedience of faith"
 - b. Mission directed among all Gentiles
5. Nature of faith:
 - a. Not nominal
 - b. Staking one's life on Christ's claim
 - c. Saves from the penalty of sin
 - d. Saves from the dominion of sin
 - e. Good works and obedience are results of faith, not a means to earn salvation
6. Mission focus:
 - a. Done for "his name's sake"
 - b. Focuses on God's honor and glory

D. The Audience in Rome

1. Majority Gentile congregation with some Jewish Christians
2. Reciprocal reference to "called saints"
 - a. Consecrated and set apart ones

- b. Holiness defined as being completely devoted to God's eternal purpose

E. Apostolic Blessing (Romans 1:7)

1. Modification of standard Greek greeting:
 - a. Changed from "Chirene" to "Charis" (Grace)
 - b. Addition of "Shalom" (Peace)
2. Invoking divine titles (God and Lord):
 - a. Signifies the divinity of Jesus Christ

II. Paul's Longing to Visit Rome (Romans 1:8-15)

A. Context of His Delayed Visit

1. Paul was repeatedly detained by his calling
2. Focused on spiritually needier destinations where Christ was not named
3. Historical delays:
 - a. Claudius' decree
 - b. Local persecutions

B. Thanksgiving and Oath (Romans 1:8-9)

1. Thanksgiving:
 - a. Standard feature in ancient letters of friendship
2. Calling God as a witness:
 - a. Functions as a solemn oath
 - b. Represents absolute ministerial integrity

C. Longing for Mutual Encouragement (Romans 1:10-12)

1. Expression of affection:
 - a. Follows standard cultural conventions of friendly letters
2. Desire to impart a spiritual gift (charisma):
 - a. Subject to and in accordance with God's will

3. Goal of the visit:

- a. Mutual encouragement of faith between siblings in Christ

D. Divine Debt and Strategy (Romans 1:13-15)

1. Obligation or debt:

- a. Compelled to preach to all Gentiles
- b. Inclusive of Greeks and barbarians, wise and foolish

2. Historical context of debt:

- a. Contrast with ancient context of loans and interest rates in the Roman world

3. Language strategy:

- a. Strategic use of the Greek language as a lingua franca

III. Thesis Statement of Romans (Romans 1:16-17)

A. Rhetorical Function

- 1. Functions as a thesis statement (propositio or thesis) in ancient rhetoric

B. Bold Proclamation of the Gospel

1. "Unashamed of the gospel"

- a. Form of litotes (deliberate understatement for boasting in the cross)

2. Overcoming societal shame:

- a. Refusal of shame associated with following an executed criminal
- b. Challenging a deeply status-conscious culture

3. Eschatological perspective:

- a. Suffering for Christ is a matter of rejoicing
- b. Prevents eschatological shame at the final judgment

C. The Gospel as God's Power for Salvation

1. Nature of this power:

- a. Power to raise the dead

- b. Power to act in history
- c. Power to transform lives

2. Universal scope:

- a. Available to the Jew first and also to the Greek (Gentile)

3. Ministry strategy:

- a. Synagogue-first strategy
- b. Attested by Paul's beatings in synagogues

4. Representation:

- a. Metonymy of "Greek" representing all Gentiles
- b. Reflects Rome's Greek-speaking communities

D. The Righteousness of God (Dikaiosune)

1. Old Testament background (Septuagint):

- a. Linked to God's faithfulness
- b. Linked to God's justice
- c. Linked to God's covenant love

2. Meaning of justification:

- a. Not a legal fiction
- b. A transforming gift of right relationship

3. Holistic salvation:

- a. Justification is inseparable from regeneration and right living

E. "From Faith to Faith"

1. Continuous pathway:

- a. Involves faith from start to finish

2. Relational dimension:

- a. Represents our faith in God based on his faithfulness

3. Nature of this faith:

- a. Not a Kierkegaardian leap in the dark
- b. A deliberate step into the light of God's truth

F. Quotation of Habakkuk 2:4

1. Formal citation:
 - a. "As it is written"
2. Theological content:
 - a. "The righteous shall live by faith"
3. Textual and translation variations:
 - a. Hebrew versus Septuagint variations regarding the pronoun ("my faith" vs. "his faith")
 - b. Paul leaves out the pronoun to resolve translation conflicts
4. Meaning of "Live":
 - a. Refers to the eschatological resurrection life of the coming age
5. Ultimate outcome:
 - a. Spared from the wrath of God
 - b. Contrast with wrath expressed by handing humanity over to moral folly