



# International Bible Study Commentary

Verse-by-Verse Bible Lessons Thru the Bible

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## Lesson 1

### **Romans 1:1-15 Commentary New International Version**

**Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** follow the verse-by-verse [International Bible Study Commentary](#). **Study Hints for Discussion and Thinking Further** will help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion: these hints are available on the *International Bible Study Commentary* website along with the *International Bible Lesson* that you may want to read to your class as part of your Bible study. You can discuss each week's commentary and lesson at the [International Bible Study Forum](#).

**(Romans 1:1) Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God—**

Paul identified himself first and foremost as a servant, a “bond slave” who had committed himself to serving Jesus Christ at all times for his entire life. Jesus Christ called Paul to go forth as His official representative, which included everything Paul said and wrote as an apostle. Jesus Christ set Paul apart to travel and teach the good news (the gospel) about God, which included the good news about the work of Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and especially about how Jesus Christ came to teach, live, die, and rise again to save sinners and grant them eternal life. [See [1 Corinthians 15:1-11, 20-22](#) to study a concise definition of the gospel of God and Paul's call by Jesus to serve God as an apostle.]

**(Romans 1:2) the gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures**

God set apart the Hebrew Scriptures for a holy, pure, and good use, through which He revealed His love for all people. Through the prophets God sent and the Scriptures, God promised to bring good news into the world

through the Messiah that He also promised to send. So people would not be deceived, the prophets particularly described how to recognize the Messiah that God would send and some of what the Messiah would do when He came into the world. The Messiah is God's only begotten Son, Jesus Christ.

**(Romans 1:3) regarding his Son, who as to his earthly life was a descendant of David,**

Even from the very beginning of the Old Testament, the good news related to the coming of Jesus Christ and to what Jesus would do after God the Father sent Jesus into the world. The Son of God came into the world from heaven as a man with human flesh and blood. He lived, died, and rose again as a fully human person. Jesus came as a descendent of King David in fulfillment of the prophets. Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. The Gospels of Matthew and Luke teach about Jesus' birth and genealogy through the ancestral line of King David.

**(Romans 1:4) and who through the Spirit of holiness was appointed the Son of God in power by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord.**

Before Jesus Christ was born, He was the eternal and only Son of God. To enter the world in fulfillment of prophecy, He was conceived by the Holy Spirit. Though He was wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger, He was the only begotten Son of God. John the Baptist first declared Jesus Christ the Son of God *with power* when John saw the Holy Spirit as a dove descend and rest upon Jesus. The sign of the dove was for John the Baptist to recognize Jesus, for the Holy Spirit was with and within Jesus even before Jesus was conceived and born. Jesus demonstrated His divine power by His many words and works of power as detailed in the four Gospels and by His perfect loving life in all He said and did to help so many in a variety of ways. Jesus showed forth the Spirit of Holiness by the way He related to His Father and to every person—both His friends and His enemies. After His enemies crucified Jesus according to prophecy and the plan of God, by His resurrection power Jesus Christ rose from the dead and God the Father officially declared Jesus Christ the Son of God with power. With divine power, Jesus rose from the dead and later ascended into heaven from

where He still reigns over all creation as Lord of lords and King of kings. According to God's perfect timing, Jesus Christ will return as He promised and create a new heaven and earth for all who love and follow Him.

**(Romans 1:5) Through him we received grace and apostleship to call all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith for his name's sake.**

By God's grace, the good news of Jesus Christ is for all people and all nations. All followers of Jesus Christ have received the unearned love and forgiveness of God, and God has given them the power of God to live for God, which is a definition of the word "grace." By grace, God has freed the followers of Jesus from slavery to sin and Satan, so they can love Jesus and obey all His commandments with hearts overflowing from gratitude and love for God. [To study how Jesus taught the truth about loving God and Him, read the IBSC on [John 14:15-23](#) and [Obeying God Is Not Optional](#).] By grace, God gives the followers of Jesus the opportunity to trust God completely. All followers of Jesus Christ have received and have believed the good news and teachings of the apostles in the New Testament, a gospel that they joyfully share with others. The grace and teachings from God through Jesus Christ and the apostles in the Bible are designed to lead the followers of Jesus to believe Jesus and the good news and live accordingly. True believers in Jesus do what Jesus and the good news says true believers will do. We love and obey God for the sake of Jesus' Name and to love and honor Jesus as He deserves. By our demonstrating the love of Jesus for all people and all nations, some will come to know, believe in, love, and honor Jesus too. We do not have Apostles today, because today we have no living eyewitnesses of Jesus death and resurrection or living "first apostles" to verify someone's claim to apostleship (see Acts 1 and 2).

**(Romans 1:6) And you also are among those Gentiles who are called to belong to Jesus Christ.**

The Holy Spirit acts through and in the grace, power, and truth of God revealed by Paul and the entire New Testament to help people hear, receive, and believe in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. As believers in Jesus Christ share the good news of Jesus Christ with others, the Holy Spirit

working within them calls people from every tribe and tongue to believe in Jesus. The Holy Spirit works with power through the truth and leads people to believe the truth and believe in Jesus; thus, by grace they come to saving faith in Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior.

**(Romans 1:7) To all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be his holy people: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.**

Paul wrote specifically to the Christians in Rome, and his greeting and letter are for all Christians everywhere—for all who will read his letter. All those who believe in Jesus Christ are loved by God and God calls them to set themselves apart from the world for His holy use and purposes as His servants. “Saints” are those who are called by God in Jesus Christ to be holy: to be set apart by God and with purity of purpose and to set themselves apart from the world to serve God. God sets His servants, His saints, apart from the world for them to believe and obey what the Bible teaches as they are empowered by God’s grace and Spirit. God gives us, His followers, peace and brings peace to us because we belong to God the Father, and we know Jesus Christ is our Savior. We have peace because we know we are loved, forgiven, and empowered by the truth and the Spirit of God to live in harmony with God’s will and purposes as the Bible teaches.

**(Romans 1:8) First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is being reported all over the world.**

In verse five, Paul wrote of the obedience of faith for the sake of Jesus Christ and His Name or reputation. Here, Paul gave thanks that the faith of the Christians in Rome was obvious and discussed throughout the world because they lived in obedience to Jesus Christ for all to see. Not only did Paul thank God for them and their faith, made possible by and through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit who indwelt them, but Jesus Christ also thanked them because they lived for the sake of His Name.

**(Romans 1:9) God, whom I serve in my spirit in preaching the gospel of his Son, is my witness how constantly I remember you**

After explaining who he was and commending the Christians in Rome, Paul explained his purpose in writing to them. He also wrote his letter to explain the goodness of Jesus Christ and the implications of the gospel as completely as possible in case the Lord had other plans for him and did not want him to go to Rome. Paul prayed before, during, and after he wrote his letter because he could serve God and them with his spirit by praying. Paul wrote that God could testify that he wrote the truth, and God could do so as they read his letter. In their hearts and minds, the Holy Spirit would confirm the truth of all Paul wrote to them. Because of God's witness, Paul's Letter to the Romans was preserved and we can read it and believe it today.

**(Romans 1:10) in my prayers at all times; and I pray that now at last by God's will the way may be opened for me to come to you.**

Paul prayed patiently for many years that God would allow him to go to Rome to minister to and teach those in the Christian Church there. Paul wanted to personally go to Rome and announce the good news about Jesus and salvation by grace through faith in Jesus to believers and unbelievers. Then, more people could come to entrust their lives and futures to Jesus, and more Christians could learn how to share their faith more effectively. For 2000 years, Paul's letter has been accomplishing God's purposes, and for this reason (among others) God wanted Paul to write this letter before going to Rome. God had good reasons for delaying Paul's trip to Rome.

**(Romans 1:11) I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong—**

Like the original disciples and first apostles, Paul had received the gift of apostleship directly from Jesus; therefore, he personally represented Jesus, who is the King of the universe and Lord over all—the Savior of the world. Paul described how he became an apostle when he wrote his letter to the Galatians: “Paul an apostle—sent neither by human commission nor from human authorities, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead” (Galatians 1:1; see also Acts 9:1-31). As an apostle, Paul had many gifts to share. He could teach the Scriptures and the truth about God and reality. He could heal the sick and cast out demons. He could demonstrate the love and power of Jesus by assuring those who

believed in Jesus that God had forgiven them for their sins, had cleansed them from sin, and had granted them eternal life with God and all who love God. Thus, Paul could establish them in their faith and love for God in Jesus Christ and assure them that they would find true peace and joy in heaven and on earth when Jesus Christ returned as He promised.

**(Romans 1:12) that is, that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith.**

The apostle Paul humbly recognized the fact that every follower of Jesus Christ has received the gift of the indwelling Holy Spirit and the adoption by God into His holy family; therefore, they could encourage him and share their God-given gifts to bless one another. Paul remained teachable as he listened to the questions of others and he anticipated questions as he wrote his Letter to the Romans. Because believers have a shared faith in God, they can bring encouragement and comfort to one another as Paul described.

**(Romans 1:13) I do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, that I planned many times to come to you (but have been prevented from doing so until now) in order that I might have a harvest among you, just as I have had among the other Gentiles.**

Paul did not complain, but he patiently waited for the Lord's perfect timing for him to go to Rome. Paul did not sit idly by waiting but saw work that needed to be done wherever the Lord led him, and he did the work at hand without complaining. Paul wanted to visit them to do the work that God had prepared him to do as he ministered in various places. Paul focused on ministering to the Gentiles because he knew that as a Christian he would be forbidden to enter and teach in the Jewish synagogues.

**(Romans 1:14) I am obligated both to Greeks and non-Greeks, both to the wise and the foolish.**

Paul was not a Greek, but a Jew. The Greeks considered those who were not Greeks "barbarians." Even though Paul could read, write, and speak in Greek, because he was a Jew the Greeks would have considered a Paul a barbarian. The Jews considered the Gentiles (those not Jews) "dogs." Paul

considered himself a debtor to the Greeks, the Jews, and the barbarians, which meant he considered himself under an obligation to all people. As an apostle, Paul believed he owed them, “all people,” the opportunity to hear and learn about the gospel of Jesus Christ that they might be saved. Paul showed that the good news of Jesus broke down all racial divisions and prejudice. The Lord Jesus had called Paul to preach to all people, which included the wise—those who thought people who believed as Paul did were “foolish”—and those this world considers unwise or unworthy of their consideration.

**(Romans 1:15) That is why I am so eager to preach the gospel also to you who are in Rome.**

Paul knew that Jesus had called him to preach the gospel, and he accepted the responsibility to share the good news of Jesus Christ with all people everywhere without prejudice. The gospel of Jesus Christ is for all people. Jesus spent time and shared good news with the lowliest of sinners, and Paul followed Jesus’ example. Paul told everyone who would listen about the salvation of God through faith in Jesus Christ, about God’s wonderful love for them, and about God’s offer of forgiveness for sin that led Jesus to come and teach and die and rise again for their benefit.

### **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further**

1. First and foremost, how do we identify or describe ourselves?
2. What did Paul say about Jesus?
3. What did Paul say the followers of Jesus have received from Jesus?
4. For what did Paul give thanks? For what do believers today give thanks?
5. How do you think Paul spent his free time as he waited to go to Rome?

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