

1:1 Paul. In introducing himself, Paul uses his Roman name and not his Jewish one (Saul). **servant.** Literally, "slave." Paul is the willing servant of Jesus whom he identifies as "Lord" (v. 4); i.e., a Master in authority over such slaves. **called.** Paul did not just decide one day that he would like to be an apostle and thus declare himself such. He is an apostle because God appointed him to be one. **apostle.** In the broad sense, an apostle is anyone sent on a mission with a message. **set apart.** In two other places, the same word is used of Paul. In Galatians 1:15 he is set apart by God from birth for a special task, and in Acts 13:2 the church sets him apart for a special mission.

1:2 gospel. The message of the early church about Jesus Christ, focusing especially on his death and resurrection; a term whose Old Testament roots carries the idea of God's deliverance of his people from exile (Isa 52:7-10), which is a foreshadowing of the New Testament idea of deliverance from the bondage of sin. **promised beforehand.** Having defined the Gospel as being "of God" in verse 1, Paul further specifies that the Gospel was a fulfillment of prophecy.

1:3-4 A short, creedal statement probably familiar to the Roman Christians (see also 4:24-25; 10:8-10; and 16:25-26). **Son ... Jesus.** Jesus belongs to two spheres of existence: the human, in which he is the descendant of King David (from whose line the Messiah was to come); and the divine, in which he is God's Son (this fact having been verified through his resurrection).

1:5 grace and apostleship. Paul did not earn or deserve to be an apostle. He is one because of God's "undeserved favor" (i.e., "grace"). **Gentiles.** Paul's apostolic commission is quite specific. His ministry is to evangelize the non-Jewish world. **obedience that comes from faith.** New Testament faith is not just intellectual belief that something is true, nor is it merely an emotional feeling of trust. It is active response to God—faith that shows itself in obedience (Gal 5:8).

1:8 thank. When Greeks wrote letters, immediately after the salutation they generally informed the recipients that they had offered a prayer to the gods on their behalf, often asking that they be given prosperity and good health. **faith.** The stress is on the *quality* of their faith (it had been demonstrated by their active obedience), not on the *fact* they believed in Jesus. **reported all over.** Paul had given similar praise to the Thessalonians

(1Th 1:7-8), so this is not just flattery reserved for those who live in the most important city.

1:11 spiritual gift. See Romans 12:6-8.

1:12 mutually encouraged. Paul's attitude toward the Roman church is one of genuine humility and not one of arrogance because he's an apostle; he will need spiritual refreshment from them when he stops there en route to Spain.

1:14 obligated. This obligation stems from the fact that Paul has been commissioned by God to this ministry. **Greeks and non-Greeks.** This distinction is cultural and not racial or national. Even though Paul is writing to Romans, the Romans considered themselves culturally to be Greeks—a designation used as a synonym for the "wise" or "educated" (as against the "foolish" or "uneducated"). **non-Greeks.** A term literally meaning "barbarians," because to Greek speakers it sounded like unintelligible gibberish when they spoke (as if they were saying "brrrrrr").

1:15 eager. Although "obligated" as an apostle, Paul discharges this task with joy and vigor. **Rome.** "What Rome meant then is almost beyond our comprehension. We must imagine it as one of the great cities of our own day together, from New York to London to Tokyo."

1:16-17 Here Paul defines the central theme of Romans: The way of getting right with God has been provided by God himself and comes via faith alone. The rest of the epistle is an exposition of this point.

1:16 ashamed. A curious word for Paul to use, unless he senses that the Roman church might be secretly embarrassed by the Gospel. **power.** The means by which God acts to do certain things—in this case to grant salvation. **salvation.** Rescue from sin (Mt 1:21), from lostness (Mt 18:11), and from the wrath of God (Ro 5:9)—to wholeness of life, to membership in God's kingdom, and to participation in God's glory. This word carries the Hebrew idea of salvation as wholeness and healing (in the here and now) as well as the idea of spiritual rescue (which will be realized in the future). **everyone who believes.** The required response to the good news of salvation is faith; i.e., faith in the message and thus faith in the One about whom the message speaks: Jesus Christ. It is this response that culminates in salvation. **Jew ... Gentile.** Another contrast which demonstrates the universality of Christianity.

1:17 righteousness. In Hebrew thought, righteousness is not so much a moral quality as it is a legal judgment. The idea here is not that a person is made righteous (in the ethical sense) or proved righteous (i.e., virtuous) by such a pronouncement. Rather one is counted or reckoned as righteous, even though one is really guilty. Being thus pardoned, a person is given a right standing before God and can enter into a relationship with him. **from God.** This declaration of righteousness comes from God to men and women—it is a reflection of God's character. He is righteous, and this fact shows itself in his saving activity. **by faith from first to last.** What faith is becomes clear as the epistle unfolds, though in verse 5 its primary meaning has already been made clear—it is believing **obedience.** The one who has faith trusts that in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, one sees the power of God at work. He or she then responds to God by submitting to Jesus Christ and trusting solely in God's powerful work to save. **"The righteous will live by faith."** This citation (from Hab 2:4) is the first of many quotes which Paul uses from the Old Testament to demonstrate and prove his point. This is an important Old Testament reference (cited also in Gal 3:11 and in Heb 10:38).

8:3-4 Despite their own poverty, they begged to be allowed to give generously to their Christian brothers and sisters in Jerusalem. This may have been in part due to a desire to communicate their goodwill to the Jews in their own area who led much of the opposition against them.

8:4 This verse contains three words which show how the motivation for this offering sprang not only from humanitarian concerns, but from distinctly Christian convictions as well. **privilege.** Literally, "grace." Giving is a human act of grace in response to God's grace (vv. 1-2). It is not an obligation to be done grudgingly, but a privilege, because it enables us to be part of God's great work. Like it is a privilege to be counted part of a winning team in sports, so our giving allows us the privilege of being part of God's winning team in Jesus Christ. **sharing.** The Greek word is *koinonia*, often translated as "fellowship." Giving is an expression of partnership in Christ. **service.** Giving is a way of ministering to the needs of others, a Christian responsibility (2Co 5:15).

8:5 The Macedonians saw their giving as an act of devotion both to the Lord and to Paul as God's apostle. Their generosity indicated they were investing their very selves for the sake of those in Jerusalem. The giving of self is always the first and most important act of giving a Christian is called to do. We are called to offer ourselves as "living sacrifices" (Ro 12:1) to God. Once we do that, all other giving falls into place.

8:6 **made a beginning.** Titus probably attempted to take up the collection when he was in Corinth in order to deliver the "sorrowful" letter, but the situation did not permit this to be accomplished.

8:7 Paul exhorts the Corinthians to participate in giving as wholeheartedly as they participate in the exercise of other spiritual gifts (1Co 12:7-11; 14:1) and as a reflection of their desire to affirm his apostleship (2Co 7:11).

8:8 **I am not commanding you.** Paul is sensitive to the charge that he has been overbearing (see 2Co 1:24 and note on 2Co 7:2).

8:9 This statement, like 2 Corinthians 5:21, may be a familiar creedal statement Paul quotes to provide a divine example for his appeal. **he was rich.** The preexistence of Christ in divine glory is in view here (Jn 1:1-18; Gal 4:4-5;

Php 2:6-7; Col 1:15-17). **he became poor.** Jesus, the Lord of all, left the divine glory to become incarnate and die in order to provide salvation for humanity (Php 2:6-11). **you ... might become rich.** Through Christ's ministry people receive the riches of salvation. As Christ has enriched the Corinthians, so they ought to be glad to share with others.

8:11 **Now finish the work.** This is reminiscent of Christ's parable of the two sons, one of whom said he was going to do something (work in the vineyard), but didn't, and the other of whom said he would not, but did (Mt 21:28-32). Following through on good intentions is vital! **according to your means.** One reason the Corinthians may have stalled is that they felt they could not make a significant enough contribution. The question is not how much one gives but simply that one gives out of love for God and people.

8:1-5 Paul has just expressed his complete confidence in the Corinthians (7:16). In the light of this he broaches the subject of the collection. He begins by giving them the example of the generosity of the churches in Macedonia.

8:1 **the grace.** Though they were themselves poor, in response to the spirit of generosity given them by God's grace they share what they have with the poor in Jerusalem. **Macedonian churches.** Macedonia was the Roman province just north of the province of Achaia where Corinth was located. The churches in mind were probably those located at Philippi, Thessalonica and Berea (Ac 16:6-17:15).

8:2 **severe trial.** In particular, the church at Thessalonica seems to have been subjected to extensive persecution because of its faith (see 1Th 1:6-8; 2:14; 3:2-5; 2Th 1:4-10). **extreme poverty.** Macedonia itself was a rich province with a flourishing mining (gold, silver, copper), lumber and agricultural industry. The Christians, it seems, were poor, due perhaps to the persecution. Christians may have been fired from jobs or had their businesses boycotted.

14:22 he dismissed the crowd. According to John 6:14-15, the crowd, sensing that the feeding was a sign that Jesus was the messianic King, tried in its enthusiasm to get Jesus to lead a revolt against Rome. Jesus would have none of that.

14:25 the fourth watch. The fourth watch ran from 3 to 6 a.m. **walking on the lake.** Since in no other situation did Jesus take a supernatural shortcut to expedite his travel plans, it is unlikely that he did so here. Instead, this event was intended to provide the disciples with further insight into his divine identity. The Old Testament pictured God as the one who treads on the water (Job 9:8; Ps 77:19), the very thing that Jesus is doing here.

14:26 It's a ghost. The sea, especially at night, was thought to be a dwelling place for demons.

14:27 Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid. This is the language of God (Isa 41:10; 43:5; Jer 1:8). **It is I.** Literally, "I am." This phrase can just be a simple declaration of someone's presence. However, in the Old Testament this is a phrase used by God to describe himself (e.g., Ex 3:1-14). In the context of Jesus' ongoing revelation of himself to the disciples, this is a sign of his divine identity.

14:30 Lord, save me! Peter's cry sums up the cry of all those who find themselves faltering in their attempts to act in faith when faced with threats to their safety. Faltering does not disqualify one from Christ's care, but can become a time to reach out afresh to him as Peter did.

14:31 You of little faith. The problem Peter faced was not the circumstances, but inadequate trust in Jesus *despite* the circumstances.

14:33 Truly you are the Son of God. In the other Gospels, this identification by the disciples does not happen until the incident at Caesarea Philippi (Mt 16:13ff). It may be that Matthew is writing with the needs of his audience in

mind. He wants to show them the deity of Jesus and recognizes this event as a decisive piece of evidence for that claim. Thus he places upon the lips of the disciples the confession he desires his readers to make for themselves. **the Son of God.** In the Old Testament, this term described God's appointed king who reigned over Israel in God's stead (e.g., Ps 2:7). In the New Testament, this title is often connected with the title "Messiah."

2:42 The four components of the church's life here may represent what occurred at their gatherings. **teaching.** The foundation for the church's life was the instruction given by the apostles as the representatives of Jesus. **fellowship.** Literally, "sharing." While this may include the aspect of sharing to meet material needs (v. 45), it most likely means their common participation in the Spirit as they worshiped together (1Co 12). **the breaking of bread.** The Lord's Supper in which they remembered his death (Lk 22:19) and recognized his presence among them (Lk 24:30-31). **to prayer.** Literally, the "prayers." This may refer to set times and forms of prayer as was the practice of the Jews.

2:43-47 The picture of the church is one of continual growth (v. 47b) marked by generous sharing (vv. 44-45) and joyful worship and fellowship (vv. 46-47a). The worship at the temple continued as before, since the line dividing Christianity from Judaism had not yet been drawn. Christians simply saw their faith as the natural end of what the Jewish faith had always declared.

2:44 everything in common. While this was a primitive form of socialism, it certainly did not include the oppressive totalitarianism or denial of God found in many modern forms. It was simply an outgrowth of the intense love people had for each other through Jesus Christ. They believed that in Christ each person's need must in some sense become everyone's need.

2:47 And the Lord added. Growth in the church was a natural result of the love, fellowship and commitment to the apostle's teaching which this section describes.

5:11-12 These are not two additional beatitudes, but a comment on the beatitude in verse 10. The insults, persecution and lies are those experienced because of one's loyalty to Jesus and his kingdom.

5:12 reward in heaven. "Heaven" is the way Matthew refers to God (see Mt 3:2). The point is not that their reward will only be after death, but rather that it will be experienced in the presence of God.

5:13 salt. Salt was a very valuable commodity in ancient times. It was not only used to flavor foods, but it was indispensable in preserving them. In an age that had no freezers or refrigerators, salt kept food from spoiling. Salt solutions were used medicinally, specifically in washing newborn infants. Rock salt was also used as a fertilizer. Salt's value then came from these many uses. Because of its value, Roman officers were given a salt allowance as part of their compensation. Our word "salary" is derived from that allowance, the *salarium*. Jesus was then attesting to the value of his disciples in the world. Perhaps he had both salt's ability to flavor, as well as its ability to preserve, in mind. The disciples are to flavor the world around them with God's love and direction; and they are to preserve that which is valuable in life from the spoilage of sin and hate. Christians who hold back from performing the func-

tion they are to have as salt are like salt that has lost its saltiness. Of course, pure salt would not ever lose its saltiness. Jesus is probably alluding to rock salt, from which the salt could wash out. This saltless white powder was used as a pavement for roads. If Jesus' followers fail to press after the qualities reflected in the Beatitudes, they will become useless to the world.

5:14 light. Light is another basic element of life. The function of light is to illuminate the darkness. This is an image for the truth Christians are to bring to the world *of the world*. Israel was to be a light for the Gentiles (see Isa 49:6). That function is now passed on to the followers of Jesus (Jn 8:12).

5:15-16 The very purpose of light is defeated if it is hidden away. In the same way, Jesus' disciples are not to be living secretly but living openly so that others can see who and what they are.

5:16 let your light shine before men. What constitutes the "light" of Christians is what they say and do. *praise your Father.* While persecution is the response the world in general has toward those who embody the qualities of God's kingdom (Mt 5:10), some people will recognize in these qualities the character of God and give praise to him.

5:17-20 The Christian's relationship to the Old Testament Law was a troubling point for the early Christian communities, composed primarily of Jewish converts. Matthew teaches that Jesus' aim was not to do away with the Law but to complete it. The next section of the Sermon illustrates what he means by this.

5:17 the Law or the Prophets. The Law referred to the first five books of the Old Testament, while the Prophets referred to the Major and Minor Prophets as well as the historical books. *fulfill.* By his teaching Jesus seeks to give expression to the intention of the Law. In contrast, for all their concern about the Law (and by their preoccupation with its details), the Pharisees and other religious leaders often overlooked its purpose. This is clearly brought out in the various examples Jesus gives in Matthew 5:21-6:18.

5:18 I tell you the truth. Literally, this is "for truly I say to you," a phrase characteristic of Jesus. No other teacher of his era was known to say this. *the smallest letter / least stroke of a pen.* Some Hebrew and Aramaic letters are distinguishable only by a small line or dot. Jesus accents the validity of the Law as the ethical norm for all God's people. *until everything is accomplished.* Until God's plan for history is complete, God's ethical demands remain in force. Jesus' mission was to call people to embrace

1:1 Timothy had long been a companion of Paul. Timothy was with Paul when he visited Philippi for the first time and so was well-known there. Paul may have dictated this letter to Timothy. **servants.** Paul lived a life of willing submission to the Lord, a point he will stress as he calls upon the Christians to serve one another. **saints.** This designation is the general New Testament word for Christians, who, because of their union with Christ, have been "set apart" to serve God. **overseers and deacons.** The function of these individuals is not completely clear, except that they are leaders of some sort, quite possibly appointed by Paul.

1:3 **every time I remember you.** This is a difficult phrase to translate from the Greek. What it seems to mean is that during his times of prayer, Paul "was compelled by love to mention his Philippian friends."

1:4 **with joy.** "Joy" is a theme that pervades Philippians. This is the first of some 14 times that Paul will use the word in this epistle. He mentions "joy" more often in this short epistle than in any of his other letters.

1:5 **because of your partnership.** The Greek word rendered here as "partnership" is the familiar word *koinonia*, translated elsewhere as "fellowship." It means, literally, "having something in common."

1:6 **confident.** This is another of the underlying themes of Philippians—confidence. This is confidence that springs out of faith in who God is and what he is doing. **the day of Christ Jesus.** This is the moment when Christ will return in glory and triumph to establish his kingdom on earth.

1:7 **defending and confirming the gospel.** These are legal terms. The reference is to Paul's defense before the Roman court, in which he hopes to be able not only to vindicate himself and the Gospel from false charges, but to proclaim the Gospel in life-changing power to those in the courtroom. (See Ac 26 for an example of how Paul did this when he stood in court before Agrippa and Festus.)

1:8 **God can testify.** In moments of deep feeling, Paul would sometimes invoke God to bear witness to the authenticity of these feelings (see also Ro 1:9; 2Co 11:11,31; 1Th 2:5). **I long.** Yet another word characteristic of Paul. He uses it seven of the nine times it is found in the New Testament. This is a strong word

and expresses the depth of Paul's feelings for them, his desire to be with them and the wish to minister to them.

1:9 **this is my prayer.** He prays that this love will increase (i.e., that it will go on developing) and that it will be regulated by knowledge and discernment. **knowledge and depth of insight.** This growing love is to be focused by intellectual and moral insight. Both qualities are gifts from God. Both are nurtured by listening to wise teachers and learning from experience.

1:10 **to discern what is best.** The word translated "discern" is used to describe the process of testing coins so as to distinguish between those that are real and those that are counterfeit.

1:10-11 **pure / blameless / fruit of righteousness.** These three terms describe the kind of people this sort of focused love produces.