

Take-Home 1: The Obedience of Faith

Romans 1:1-17 · Keep this sheet; bring it back each week

What We Found

Paul introduced himself to a church he had never met with the only credential he cares about: he belongs to Jesus Christ, servant, called, set apart (1:1). The gospel he carries is not a new idea but an old oath kept: God promised David an offspring with an everlasting throne (2 Sam 7:12-16), and the resurrection is that Son's public enthronement, "designated Son of God in power" (1:4).

Paul's purpose for everyone, everywhere, is "the obedience of faith" (1:5): faith that hands God the intellect and the will together, faith that obeys. And his thesis for the whole letter is that the gospel "is the power of God for salvation to every one who has faith" (1:16), a thesis he anchors in a prophet's crisis: Habakkuk, demanding answers about injustice, was told that "the righteous shall live by his faith" (Hab 2:4). What Paul means by "the righteousness of God" (1:17) is a question the letter will keep answering. Keep it open.

Voices of the Church

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: ST. AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO

Romans is the book God used to break Augustine's last resistance. In a garden in Milan, in torment over his inability to change, he heard a child chanting "take and read." He opened Paul's letters to Romans 13:13-14, "put on the Lord Jesus Christ," and wrote that he needed to read no further: "it was as though the light of confidence flooded into my heart and all the darkness of doubt was dispelled" (Confessions VIII.12). "The power of God for salvation" is not an abstraction; it is what happened to Augustine.

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

St. John Chrysostom, who preached a celebrated series of homilies on Romans, teaches in substance that the proof of the gospel's power is what it actually did: a message about a crucified man, carried by fishermen and tentmakers without armies or wealth, overturned the settled religion of the Mediterranean world. Paul's "I am not ashamed" is the boldness of a man who has watched weakness conquer strength.

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: ST. THOMAS AQUINAS

St. Thomas Aquinas, in the opening of his commentary on Romans, teaches in substance that among all Paul's letters this is the one that studies the grace of Christ in itself, at the root, where others study grace at work in the sacraments or the Church. When the question is the deepest one, how anyone is saved, the Church reaches for Romans first.

Live It This Week

- Read Romans 1:16-17 aloud once a day, and each time ask in prayer: Lord, where am I ashamed of you?

- Name one concrete area where faith is asking for your obedience this week, one specific act, and do it.
- Tell one person one piece of genuinely good news about God this week, in your own words.
- Fill in the My Guess box below, then fold this sheet closed or seal the box with tape. No one reads it, including you, until it opens in Session 8.

My Guess (sealed until Session 8)

In one sentence: what must a person do to be saved?

Write your honest answer today, before the study shapes it. Your first answer is part of the study.

Memory Verse

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel: it is the power of God for salvation to every one who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek."

Romans 1:16 (RSV2CE)

Before Next Session

Read Romans 1:18-32 once, slowly. Catechism references for this session: CCC 143-144, 2087.