1215 From faith to faith, viewing Old Testament through New Testament - Rom(1)1-32 (by Whirlwind)

First, we discuss how the Lord Jesus is the Christ who rose from the dead and Paul's blessing; we explore why the Epistle to the Romans was written after the Book of 2 Corinthians and in Corinth, and explain that believing in the true gospel requires putting it into practice. Second, we will address the faith of the church in Rome and Paul's desire to preach the gospel to the people of Rome, emphasizing that spiritual gifts cannot be distributed to others but are given by the Holy Spirit as He wills. Third, we will expound on how God's righteousness is from faith to faith and is revealed in the Gospel, explaining that Christians must be in faith from the very beginning, believing that both the Old and New Testaments are inspired by the same triune God, and mentioning general revelation. Finally, it warns against committing homosexuality and various other sins. It references a previous article and states that the proper Christian response toward homosexuals is to love them with God's love, but not to participate in their sinful acts. It emphasizes that the Old Testament must be interpreted in light of the New Testament—and not the other way around—and that one must absolutely not put the cart before the horse.

Please note that this article is an expansion of the topicwise Bible study held on Sunday (11/8/26). Unless otherwise specified, verses refer to those in NASB95. If this article refers previous articles, they can all be found on our website, 'https://a-christian-voice.com/'; click on 'Understanding Spiritual Life'.

1. The Lord Jesus is the Christ who rose from the dead and Paul's blessing

"Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures, concerning His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh, who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for His name's sake, among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ; to all who are beloved of God in Rome, called as saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."(Romans 1:1-7)

Before we discuss the Book of Romans, we must first consider why it was written after the Book of 2 Corinthians and where it was written; let us begin with the latter. The Book of Romans states, "...Erastus, the city treasurer greets you, and Quartus, the brother."(Romans 16:23) In other words, the Book of Romans was written in the city where Erastus lived. So where did Erastus live? The Scripture makes it very clear:"Erastus remained at Corinth, ..."(2 Timothy 4:20) Therefore, the Book of Romans was written in Corinth.

Looking back at the earlier passage, we know that in the Book of 2 Corinthians, the believers were asked to prepare their offerings (see 2 Corinthians 8:6-21), and it is made

very clear:"and not only this, but he has also been appointed by the churches to travel with us in this gracious work, ..."(2 Corinthians 8:19) "but now, I am going to Jerusalem serving the saints."(Romans 15:25) Paul was going to Corinth, for he said, "and we are ready to punish all disobedience, whenever your obedience is complete."(2 Corinthians 10:6) Titus brought precisely this news; the Scripture says, "His affection abounds all the more toward you, as he remembers the obedience of you all, how you received him with fear and trembling."(2 Corinthians 7:15) Therefore, Paul had already visited Corinth before bringing the offering to support the saints; in other words, the Book of Romans was written after the Book of 2 Corinthians.

We now turn to the Epistle to the Romans itself. Right from the beginning, it emphasizes that "Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God."(Romans 1:1) He began emphasizing this because the church in Corinth had previously questioned his apostleship; he had not done so before this. He goes on to say, "...the gospel of God, which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures "(Romans 1:2) Then he speaks of the Lord Jesus as the Son of God, raised from the dead. Please look at the Scripture to see how he puts it.

Paul said, "...Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience (G5218) of faith (G4102) among all the Gentiles for His name's sake, among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ."(Romans 1:4-6) Please note that this compound phrase, "obedience (G5218) of faith (G4102)," appears in this form only twice in the New Testament. The other instance is: the mystery "...now is manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all the nations, leading to obedience (G5218) of faith (G4102)."(Romans 16:26) Notice that "...to bring about the obedience of faith..." in Romans 1:5 requires action. Then he blessed them: "to all who are beloved of God in Rome, called as saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."(Romans 1:7) Please note that this passage speaks of God's absolute sovereignty; He decides, and we can only hope that He will act accordingly.

2. The faith of the church in Rome and Paul's desire to preach Gospel to people of Rome

"First (G4412, first; G3303, indeed), I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, because your faith (G4102) is being proclaimed throughout the whole world. For God, whom I serve in my (G3450) spirit (G4151, spirit) in the preaching of the gospel of His Son, is my witness as to how unceasingly I make mention of you, always in my prayers making request, if perhaps now at last by the will of God I may succeed in coming to you. For I long to see you so that I may impart some spiritual gift to you, that you may be established; that is, that I may be encouraged together with you while among you, each of us by the other's faith, both yours and mine. I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that often I have planned to come to you (and have been prevented so far) so that I may obtain some fruit among you also, even as among the rest of the Gentiles. I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. So, for my part, I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome."(Romans 1:8-15)

Let's first look at the word "first (G4412, first; G3303, indeed)", which is actually composed of two Greek words. You won't find the word "second " in the Book of Romans; this usage is identical to that in another verse: "For, in the first place (G4412, first; G3303, indeed), when you come together as a church, I hear that divisions exist among you; and in part I believe it."(1 Corinthians 11:18) You won't find "second" in the Book of 1 Corinthians either, so this simply means "the first thing to say."

The passage clearly states that the faith (G4102) of the church in Rome was widely known, so Paul says, "...I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, ..."(Romans 1:8) You see, he knew very clearly that it was through Jesus Christ, not through himself. Please note that this Greek word G4151 can have two meanings; in the English translation, they are distinguished by capitalization, Here, the word "my (G3450)" is used, thus it becomes very clear that the reference is to the human spirit (G4151), but it is not always this clear; one must examine the context within the Bible to determine which meaning applies, so it is essential to discern between them accurately.

He continues, "For God, whom I serve in my spirit in the preaching of the gospel of His Son, is my witness as to how unceasingly I make mention of you, always in my prayers making request, if perhaps now at last by the will of God I may succeed in coming to you."(Romans 1:9-10) This was merely his hope; ultimately, in accordance with God's will, he arrived in Rome while in chains, as the Scripture says: "And he stayed two full years in his own rented quarters and was welcoming all who came to him, preaching the kingdom of God and teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all openness, unhindered."(Acts 28:30-31) You see, this was indeed God's will.

Then he said, "For I long to see you so that I may impart some spiritual gift to you, that you may be established."(Romans 1:11) Some people use this verse to argue that spiritual gifts can be imparted to others, but this is incorrect. Keep in mind, "But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills."(1 Corinthians 12:11). It was not Paul who decided this; rather, this passage refers to Paul's preaching, which is why he says, "that is, that I may be encouraged together with you while among you, each of us by the other's faith, both yours and mine."(Romans 1:12).

He says he does indeed have plans to go to Rome, "I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that often I have planned to come to you (and have been prevented so far) so that I may obtain some fruit among you also, even as among the rest of the Gentiles."(Romans 1:13) You see, he is indeed talking about preaching! He makes it very clear: "I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. So, for my part, I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome."(Romans 1:14-15)

3. The righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith in the Gospel

"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. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "But the righteous man shall live by faith."

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures. Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them. For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen."(Romans 1:16-25)

Right from the start, it is stated that God loves the world; He saves both Jews and Gentiles alike. The principle is this: "He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."(John 3:18) There is simply a matter of sequence, as the Scripture says, "...the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek."(Romans 1:16) Paul himself, of course, did not consider the Gospel a shame. From a human perspective, this Gospel is inherently beneficial, "For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "But the righteous man shall live by faith.""(Romans 1:17). Therefore, it is only when Christians possess that initial faith—believing in the Lord Jesus Christ and knowing that both the New and Old Testaments are inspired by God—that they can, after experiencing certain events, grow in faith through faith, allowing their faith to gradually increase.

When Paul said, "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work."(2 Timothy 3:16-17), he was referring only to the Old Testament—the New Testament had not yet been given at that time! Therefore, from the very beginning, Christians must walk by faith, believing that the New Testament is also inspired by God, and that both the New and Old Testaments come from the same triune God. The "as it is written" referred to here is this verse: "...But the righteous will live by his faith."(Habakkuk 2:4). This is indeed true.

Paul makes it very clear: "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness."(Romans 1:18) In other words, "...he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."(John 3:18) Originally, in the general revelation given to all people, "This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed."(John 3:19-20) This is the general revelation given to all people, as opposed to the so-called special revelation given to Christians.

**But "The heart is more deceitful than all else And is desperately sick;
Who can understand it?"(Jeremiah 17:9) Some people, despite having general revelation, harden their hearts in unbelief and become ungodly and unrighteous. "For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools."(Romans 1:21-22) Consequently, they "...exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures."(Romans 1:23) This refers to the worship of tangible objects as idols; at times, it also refers to the worship of intangible things, such as the worship of wealth. The Scriptures clearly state, "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth (Mammon)."(Matthew 6:24)**

In fact, God had already spoken similar words in the Old Testament: "So watch yourselves carefully, since you did not see any form on the day the LORD spoke to you at Horeb from the midst of the fire, so that you do not act corruptly and make a graven image for yourselves in the form of any figure, the likeness of male or female, the likeness of any animal that is on the earth, the likeness of any winged bird that flies in the sky, the likeness of anything that creeps on the ground, the likeness of any fish that is in the water below the earth. And beware not to lift up your eyes to heaven and see the sun and the moon and the stars, all the host of heaven, and be drawn away and worship them and serve them, those which the LORD your God has allotted to all the peoples under the whole heaven."(Deuteronomy 4:15-19)

As it was then, so it is today: "Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them. For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, ..."(Romans 1:24-25) Many things are acts of impurity, but here the reference is clearly to failing to honor the Creator. Finally, Paul could not help but exclaim, "...the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen."(Romans 1:25)

4. Do not commit homosexuality or any other sins

"For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, and in the same way (G3668) also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error. And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper, being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; they are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful; and although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them."(Romans 1:26-32)

Paul makes it very clear: "For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; ..."(Romans 1:26) The first point specifically addresses the prohibition against homosexuality: "...for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error."(Romans 1:26-27) Although lesbian relationships are not explicitly mentioned here, the use of "in the same way (G3668)" indicates that they are also included. In fact, homosexuality was explicitly prohibited in the Old Testament, as the Lord said to Moses: "If there is a man who lies with a male as those who lie with a woman, both of them have committed a detestable act; they shall surely be put to death. Their bloodguiltiness is upon them."(Leviticus 20:13)

We know that the Bible defines sin as disobedience to God. We previously spent a considerable amount of time explaining this point in "1. Definition of sin" in the article "1096 Yu Hongjie's Discipleship of Newself – Unbiblical Places (1)." Please refer to that article. Here, God has already stated that homosexuality is forbidden; therefore, in the Bible, homosexuality is a sin. However, the Bible also makes it very clear: "For God so loved the world, ..."(John 3:16). Thus, all homosexuals equally loved by God. Therefore, the correct approach for a Christian is to love homosexuals with God's love, but not to participate in their sinful acts; we must distinguish between the person and their sin. For "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."(1 John 1:9) A repentant homosexual can still be saved; examples of this can be found on YouTube, and I myself have personally heard such a testimony in church.

He went on to say, "And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper, being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; they are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful."(Romans 1:28-31) So he gave quite a few obvious examples, but we must realize that these are not all of them. He then goes on to say, "and although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them."(Romans 1:32) Did not the scribes and Pharisees commit many unreasonable acts—not only doing them themselves but also taking pleasure in others doing them? The Scripture makes it very clear: "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you travel around on sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves."(Matthew 23:15)

Finally, we should mention that while we have discussed some Old Testament matters here, we must recognize that we now live in the New Testament era. Apart from a few prophecies yet to be fulfilled, the Old Testament consists of God's past works, which allow us to discern some of the principles by which He acts. May it be as the Book of Psalm says to Moses, "He made known His ways to Moses, His acts to the sons of Israel."(Psalm

103:7) When the Pharisees came to test Jesus, "They said to Him, "Why then did Moses command to give her a certificate of divorce and send her away?" He said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart Moses permitted you to divorce your wives; but from the beginning it has not been this way."(Matthew 19:7-8) Therefore, the New Testament clearly states that God permitted this to happen under the circumstances that existed in Moses' time, but it was not God's original will. In other words, when such contradictions arise, we must take the New Testament's teachings as our guide when interpreting the Old Testament. Simply put, with the exception of this specific matter, we must always interpret the Old Testament in light of the New Testament; the reverse is not valid. We must never put the cart before the horse.