

## **A Commentary on Romans 1–8**



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Romans 1-8**

David P. Kuske

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## Works Cited with Abbreviations

BAGD	Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich, Danker, <i>A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> , 2nd Edition (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1979).
Lenski	R. C. H. Lenski, <i>The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans</i> (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1936, 1945, 1961).
Liddell & Scott	Liddell and Scott, <i>A Greek-English Lexicon</i> (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1951).
Louw & Nida	Louw and Nida, editors, <i>Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains</i> , 2 vols. (New York: United Bible Societies, 1988).
LW	Martin Luther, <i>Luther's Works</i> , American Edition, 55 vols. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1955–1986).
Metzger	Bruce Metzger, <i>A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament</i> (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft; United Bible Societies, 1994).
NIV	Holy Bible, New International Version®. NIV®. Copyright© 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved.
Robertson	A. T. Robertson, <i>A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research</i> (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1934).
Schreiner	Thomas Schreiner, <i>Romans</i> (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998).
TDNT	<i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i> , G. Kittel and G. Friedrich, editors; trans. and ed. G. Bromiley, 9 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964–1974).
UBS	United Bible Societies





## Introduction

### *General content of the letter*

Luther's oft-quoted comment about Romans is a good place to begin summarizing the general content of the first eight chapters of this epistle. "This epistle is really the chief part of the New Testament, and it is truly the purest gospel. It is worthy . . . that every Christian should know it word for word, by heart . . . that he should occupy himself with it every day, as the daily bread of the soul" (LW 35:365).

Romans truly is the "purest gospel"—especially the last part of chapter 3 and chapters 4 and 5. But there is also a good deal of law in chapters 1–8. After the introduction in the first half of chapter 1, Paul deals in the darkest of terms about the failure of both Gentiles and Jews to live perfect lives as God's law requires (last part of chapter 1, all of chapter 2, and the first part of chapter 3). Then, after presenting the "purest gospel" in the next chapters, Paul follows in chapters 6–8 with one of the clearest presentations in all of Scripture on the Christian's life of sanctification.

Thus Romans 1–8 deals with the three basic truths of the Christian faith: sin, acquittal, thanks. Or an expanded summary would be (1) every person is a sinner who deserves God's condemnation (Ro 1b–3a); (2) every person is acquitted as a result of God's undeserved kindness (Ro 3b–5); and (3) every Christian wants to thank God by living according to his will (Ro 6–8).

### *Author, date, place, recipients*

The author is identified in 1:1 as the apostle Paul.

The recipients are all the Christians in Rome (1:5,7,15). Paul's greetings in chapter 16 indicate that there were a number of groups of Christians, perhaps as many as five, meeting at several places in the city (16:5,10b,11b,14,15). His greetings also indicate that though Paul had never been to Rome, some of these Christians were his friends, relatives, converts, and coworkers. Some of the recipients were Jews, as 2:17ff., 23f., and 25 indicate. But the Roman Jewish community in general knew very little about the Christian faith when Paul arrived in A.D. 60 (Ac 28:22). Most of the recipients were Gentiles. In Romans 1:5,6 Paul speaks of the recipients as Gentiles

who were called to belong to Jesus. In 1:13 Paul says he planned to come to Rome so he might have a harvest among them as he had among the “other Gentiles.” It is argued that Romans 9–11 would have only been written to a congregation that had a sizeable number of Jews. But in his concluding words in 11:22-32, Paul speaks of the Jews as “they” and the Gentiles as “you.” And these concluding words indicate that the whole thrust of these three chapters is to give the Gentiles a warning not to despise the kindness of God, as the Jews had done.

The Roman Christians were known to be so well grounded in the faith that they were competent to instruct others (1:8; 15:14). Yet Paul says he would not apologize for reminding them of such basics as law and gospel, sin and grace (15:15,16). There were also some apparent areas of weakness in sanctification—areas such as obedience to the government (Ro 13) and loving concern for Christians who are weak in faith (Ro 14 and 15a)—about which Paul also gave them instruction.

The approximate date is also indicated in the letter. In 15:25-27 Paul says that the offering he asked the Christians in Macedonia and Achaia to gather for their needy fellow believers in Jerusalem was complete. He was on his way to bring that offering to the church in Judea. This would put the writing of this letter in early A.D. 57.

The place is also quite certain. Paul commends Phoebe to the church in Rome (16:1). It is suggested by some that she was the one who carried this letter to Rome. Her home is identified as Cenchrea, a port city located about six miles east of Corinth. Paul says that Gaius was his host in the city where he was as he wrote this letter (16:23). Though Gaius is a common Roman name, the Gaius to whom Paul most likely refers is the one mentioned in 1 Corinthians 1:14. He was one of the few converts whom Paul himself baptized. Also, the Erastus whom Paul mentions in 16:23 as the director of public works might be the Erastus referred to on a block of stone found in Corinth by archaeologists as holding this high office. Corinth also fits well with Paul’s comments about the completion of the offering noted in the previous paragraph. Corinth was Paul’s last stop on his third mission journey. From there he intended to return directly to Jerusalem by boat but, because of a plot against him, went by way of Macedonia instead (Ac 20:3b).

### ***Occasion and purpose***

As he concluded his third mission journey, Paul said that his work in the eastern Mediterranean region was complete (Ro 15:19,23).

After he brought the offering to Jerusalem, he intended to stop at Rome on his way to Spain (15:24a,28). He would not stay long in Rome. He wanted to see them so that he and they would be mutually encouraged by one another's faith (1:11f.). He wanted to enjoy their refreshing company for a while and then have them assist him on his way to Spain (1:11f.; 15:24b,32). His short stay was based on his intention never to preach the gospel where Christ was already known, lest he would build on someone else's foundation (15:20).

But Paul wasn't sure he was going to make it to Rome. He knew he faced opposition in Judea (15:31). Before he left Corinth, there was a plot on his life (Ac 20:3). As an apostle he knew he had an obligation to preach the gospel also to those in Rome (Ro 1:14f.). Phoebe was going to Rome (16:1), so sending this letter with her gave him the chance to begin to fulfill this obligation, just in case he never made it to Rome himself. This was a beginning that he hoped to complete by a personal visit in the not too distant future. Little did Paul know that the opposition awaiting him in Jerusalem would delay his visit for the better part of three years and lead to his coming to Rome as a prisoner to undergo trial before the Roman emperor.

### **Exegesis-Based Interpretation**

#### ***The Bible is God's inspired Word***

The Bible is either all God's Word or none of it is God's Word. Theories that try to make the Bible partly God's Word and partly man's word eventually end up denying all the basic truths the Bible teaches. The minions of Satan introduce an insidious process into Bible interpretation by saying some of it is man's word. Paul describes that process this way in Galatians 5:9: "A little yeast works through the whole batch of dough."

The theory that the Bible is partly man's word also flies in the face of what Scripture says about itself. First Corinthians 2:13 and 2 Peter 1:21 say that the biblical writers did not use any words that are man's words but used only words given by the Spirit. Thus 2 Timothy 3:16 declares, "All Scripture is God-breathed." This truth is woven throughout the warp and woof of Scripture. One cannot read very far into the Bible without coming across a declaration of, an allusion to, an implication about, or a reference to the fact that what is being read is God's Word (e.g., Ro 1:2,16; 2:2,8,12,16,18, 20,29; 3:2,10,19,21,31, etc. throughout Romans).

This fact has two important implications for exegesis-based interpretation of Scripture. The first is that every word of a verse is

important since every word is God-breathed. Doing an exegesis doesn't mean taking a couple "key" words from a verse and basing one's interpretation on those words. Rather, one needs to analyze every word so that the interpretation is neither more than what a verse means nor less than what God is saying.

The second implication is to let Scripture interpret Scripture. Interpretation dare not become what the interpreter thinks a verse means but always and only what God says it means. After analyzing each word of a verse in the original language, each analysis is then used to interpret the other words in the verse. If a word has several possible meanings, the other words in the verse are used to determine which one fits the verse best. If a word or phrase modifies another word or phrase, one uses the modifier to help determine the meaning of the word or phrase it modifies. If the Greek syntax in a sentence makes a phrase or clause a subordinate thought, then the interpreter can't make it the main thought.

Once the thought of all the words in a verse have been taken into account in determining the meaning of the verse, then the meaning needs to be modified by any thoughts in the surrounding verses that are adverbial or adjectival modifiers. Also, any parallel or subordinate thoughts that are tied to this verse by a conjunction are important in determining the meaning of the verse. Finally, any parallel verse (i.e., a verse that is talking about the same thing with the same or slightly different words) in the wider context of the chapter, book, or all of Scripture must be used in determining the final meaning of the verse at hand. Exegesis-based interpretation of this kind is a time-consuming and painstaking process. But it is the only way the interpreter can say when he is done with his exegesis, "This is what the Lord says!"

Are there times when there are two possible interpretations of a verse? Yes, but not very often. If one of the two possible interpretations provides a meaning that is in conflict with another part of Scripture, that interpretation is not a valid one. The Holy Spirit would not have led one of the writers to say something that would conflict with what the Spirit says elsewhere in Scripture. When the interpreter first considers a verse, he will at times see two possible valid meanings for the verse. But usually one of the meanings will be eliminated by a careful study of which meaning fits best with the preceding or following context of the verse. On rare occasions, both meanings will be allowed to stand if (1) they are both in agreement with the rest of Scripture, and (2) they both fit the context equally well.

***Special challenges in doing exegesis-based interpretation***

In many ways the Greek and English languages are alike. Both have subjects and verbs forming the main thought of a sentence. Both use adverbial and adjectival modifiers. Both use conjunctions to indicate coordinate and subordinate thoughts. Both have verb tenses and moods. Both use frequent prepositional phrases. These similarities ease the task for the interpreter when he translates Greek to English or seeks to transfer meaning from the one language to the other.

Two slight differences complicate the interpreter's task a little. One difference is that a Greek writer would often string long sentences together with multiple conjunctions and/or the use of many adjectival or adverbial modifiers. Paul's writing is a typical example. For this reason, each section of exegesis in this book begins with a diagram (Schema) to help the reader picture how each of the many parts of a sentence relate to one another. A dashed line (-----) indicates a tie being made by a conjunction between what follows and what precedes. A small arrowhead with a dotted line (.....▶) is used to indicate adjectival or adverbial modifiers. A larger arrowhead with a solid line (————▶) indicates the direct or indirect object of verbal action.

Another slight difference is the constant use of the genitive case as an adjectival modifier in Greek. It is easy to translate such genitives in English with a prepositional phrase beginning with "of." But doing so does not always make the meaning clear, since "of" phrases in English can mean many different things. "Streets of gold" indicates what the streets were made of, but "soldier of fortune" gives a reason why a person might become a soldier. "Spoils of victory" tells what the results of victory are, but "hope of victory" suggests what a person looks forward to when entering a battle or during battle. So the difference of many adjectival genitives in Greek ends up posing the same problem as interpreting "of" prepositional phrases in English.

Three major differences between Greek and English require special attention by the interpreter:

1. The three verb tenses used most often in Greek stress different types of action more than different times of the action. The present tense in Greek could more properly be called the "continuing action tense"; the aorist tense more properly the "it happened tense"; and the perfect tense the "completed action with continuing result

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<sup>1</sup>Some grammars still say the aorist is the "one time action tense." It is true that when something happens, it usually happens only once. But there are so many examples of the aorist not being a onetime happening that this is not the best way to

tense.” Since the meaning of tenses is a key difference between Greek and English, in this book a comment is made on the significance of the tense of every verbal form. Though in some verses these comments may not be critical to the meaning, it is helpful to see that the use of tenses is consistent in meaning. Then when one bases a doctrinal conclusion on the use of a Greek tense (e.g., the use of the present tense in Romans 2:7-19), it will be clear that it is what God really means rather than just the whim of the interpreter.

2. Both the use of an article with a noun and the lack of an article are significant. Though there are other meanings of an article used with a noun in Greek (e.g., generic or indicating that two nouns form one idea), most often the article stresses that the noun is specific/definite (i.e., the one and only, the well-known, the aforementioned, a possessive idea such as his or hers). Though the lack of an article may indicate that a noun is nonspecific/indefinite (i.e., some kind of . . .), most often it is qualitative. This is true when no article is used with a noun but the noun is made specific/definite by the context (most often by an adjectival modifier). Then the writer or speaker is stressing the quality (the essence, the vocable meaning) of the noun. We might do the same thing in English by underlining a word, putting it in bold type or italics, or doing all three. An example would be χάρις. With the article (ἡ χάρις) the meaning is “the one and only, the *well-known* undeserved kindness (of God).” Without an article but modified by an adjectival genitive (χάρις θεοῦ), the emphasis shifts to the quality of χάρις, “the kindness of God that is totally *undeserved*.” The meaning is not radically different, but there is a clear difference in what is being emphasized. In this book a comment is made on every use or nonuse of an article. Again, though the difference in emphasis may not always be critical, it is important to see that the meaning of the use or nonuse of the article is consistent. Then when a doctrinal conclusion is based on this aspect of Greek grammar (e.g., Paul’s use of νόμος with or without the article), it will establish that the interpretation is not a whim of the interpreter.

3. The Greek uses participles in almost every sentence—often multiple participles of different kinds. Some participles complete the idea of the verb (supplementary); some modify a noun in the sentence even though the participle is a verbal form (adjectival/

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begin to interpret the aorist tense. There are three examples already in the first 13 verses in Romans 1 of aorists that are not onetime happenings: v2 προεπηγγείλατο; v11 στήριχθῆναι; v13 ἐκωλύθην.

attributive); some participles are adverbial (circumstantial). How does one sort through this problem and interpret properly? Probably the best way is to try English translations that help determine what kind of participle each is: a supplementary participle can be translated by a phrase that indicates how it completes the main verb (“he began *to speak*” or “he said *that he is coming*”); an adjectival/attributive participle can be translated by a relative clause (“the Lord *who sent his son*”); an adverbial/circumstantial participle can be translated by an adverbial clause (“*after/while he spoke . . .*” or “*because he spoke . . .*” or “*although he spoke . . .*,” etc.). But determining the kind of participle is only the beginning of interpretation. The next step is to spell out, especially in the case of the adjectival/attributive or adverbial/circumstantial participles, exactly how this participial modifier contributes to the meaning of the verse. Not surprising, then, in this book a good deal of time is devoted to interpreting participles.

***Establishing which variant is to be used  
in interpreting a verse***

When the printing press enabled mass production of the Greek New Testament starting in the 16th century, the only witnesses of the Greek New Testament used to produce the Greek text were minuscules that had been copied in Byzantium from the 10th to the 15th centuries along with a few early translations. This text became known as the *Textus Receptus*, but the various editions were not a uniform text. There were various forms of the *Textus Receptus* (e.g., one in England, another in continental Europe). The various editors used the copies they had at hand so there were variants from one form of the *Textus Receptus* to another.

In the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries, many more minuscules and early translations as well as quotations from the church fathers, lectionaries, and copies of the Greek New Testament going back to the 4th through 6th centuries (uncials), were found and used by editors to produce Greek New Testament texts. Unfortunately, rationalistic influence led to a theory which said that the New Testament text was not a result of the Holy Spirit’s inspiration. Instead, the New Testament was viewed as having evolved over four or five centuries as humans chose to add to or subtract from the text. Westcott and Hort’s theory said that uncials Aleph and B were the purest result of this evolution and that other witnesses were more tainted. This theory held sway from the end of the 19th century into the first half of the 20th century.

The discovery of the papyri at the end of 19th century clearly indicated that there was no evolutionary process at work during the first centuries of the New Testament era. Early copies of the papyri dating back to the 2nd and 3rd centuries were so similar to New Testament copies of the 4th to 6th centuries that it was acknowledged by any unbiased observer that there could not have been an evolutionary process.

Today there are still some who adhere to the *Textus Receptus* text or the Westcott-Hort text. But the former text is based only on New Testament witnesses of the 10th to 15th centuries. Those who hold to the *Textus Receptus* theory do so mainly because they want to uphold the KJV or some derivative of the KJV text. The Westcott-Hort text is based on only a small number of uncials from the early centuries. Those who uphold this theory do so mainly because they approach Scripture from a rationalistic viewpoint. Each is a faulty approach because for a subjective reason, each uses only a portion of the total number of extant witnesses to the New Testament text.

Let's use an example to illustrate. A teacher of 30 high school students asks them to copy three pages of text while he dictates. Then he burns the original copy he has in his hands. Can the original text be restored with any accuracy? Yes. How? By collecting all the copies the students made and comparing them with one another. The teacher can't just use three or four of the copies from one part of the room or three or four copies from another part of the room. He might come pretty close to restoring the original if he takes only a portion of the copies, but he could be much more sure if he uses them all. Here and there one or two students might have misspelled a word or inverted words or omitted a word or changed a word. But in the particular sentence where one of these things happens, the copy or two with such a variant could be ignored and the other 27 or 28 copies that have the same wording could confidently be declared to be the same as the original.

In the same way, the only objective way to work with the New Testament variants is to use all the witnesses of the text we have, taking into account the date of each witness and the geographical region it represents. When one variant is recorded in copies that are early and represent many regions while the other variant is in copies that are either later or represent only one or two regions, the former can safely be considered the original. This is the approach used in this book in considering variants in a verse.

It must be added that consideration of variants is never a very important part of exegesis-based interpretation. This is true because



less than one tenth of one percent of the text has variants that are of any real significance for interpretation (an observation made by Westcott and Hort). And none of these few variants of significance have any doctrinal importance. For these reasons, though the *Textus Receptus* text and the Westcott-Hort text use only select portions of all the witnesses, a person will not end up with differing doctrine solely because he used either of these texts. Having said this, it must also be stated that all variants of any significance should be given careful consideration on the basis of all the witnesses God has preserved for us. We are dealing with God's words, and we do not want to treat even one of those words lightly.



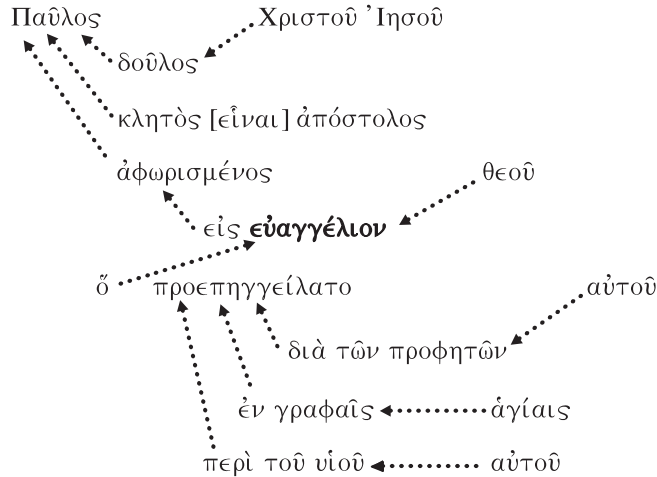
## Romans 1

### *The Flow of Thought*

Paul begins this letter with some words about the gospel he was called to preach to the Gentiles, including the Romans (vv1-7). He follows with words that indicate his eagerness to come at last to see the Romans. His goal is that there will be mutual encouragement during his visit with them (vv8-15). In verses 16 and 17, Paul writes words that are among the most quoted from this letter. Many also say that these words are the theme of Romans: “I am never ashamed of the good news because it is the power of God that is at work resulting in salvation.” In the last half of the chapter, the apostle describes in frightening terms a judgment of God. It is a judgment that comes during this life upon those who disregard the natural knowledge of God, which he reveals so clearly in nature.

### **Romans 1:1-3a**

(Key:.....► indicates an adjectival or adverbial modifier)



**Romans 1:1a** Παῦλος δοῦλος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ = “Paul, a slave of Jesus Christ”

- Following the custom used in Greek letters, Paul begins by identifying himself as the author of this letter. In most of his other

letters the recipients are identified next. But in this letter he doesn't do this until verse 7.

- With the appositive δοῦλος Paul stresses that he is completely dedicated to serving his master Jesus Christ. A δοῦλος is a servant who has no will of his own but does the will of his κύριος, his master. By the lack of the article, Paul stresses the complete submission that is the basic quality of the word δοῦλος.
- The objective genitive indicates whom Paul serves, namely Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ, the one whom God anointed (Χριστοῦ) to be the Savior from sin (Ἰησοῦ).

**Romans 1:1b** κλητὸς [εἶναι] ἀπόστολος = “called to be an apostle”

- This second appositive adds another point about himself in which Paul explains in what way he is a slave of Jesus Christ.
- The adjective κλητὸς refers to Jesus' appearance to Paul, then named Saul, on the road to Damascus (Ac 9:1-6). Jesus called this fierce persecutor of the church to be his servant in spreading the church.
- The infinitive εἶναι needs to be added because Paul is stating what Christ called him to be.
- The word ἀπόστολος means one who is sent on a mission. Here it is used in a technical sense, referring to the special position of an apostle. The apostles were men chosen by Christ and sent on the mission to preach the gospel in all the world (Mt 19:20,21; Mk 16:15), to watch over the whole church (2 Co 11:28), and to be the writers of God's New Testament Word (2 Pe 3:2). This is the ministry to which Paul devotes himself as a δοῦλος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ.
- The lack of an article stresses this special position as an apostle, to which Christ called Paul.

**Romans 1:1c** ἀφωρισμένος εἰς εὐαγγέλιον θεοῦ = “picked out and set aside for the special purpose of telling the good news from God”

- As the second appositive explained the first appositive further, this third appositive explains the second in more detail. What was Paul to do as a called apostle?

- Ἀφορισμένος is an attributive participle highlighting a special point about Paul as an apostle. The verb ἀφορίζω means to pick someone from a group for a special assignment. The agent of the passive voice in this instance is Jesus, who called Paul to be an apostle (cf. the preceding appositive). The perfect tense indicates that Christ's giving Paul this assignment had a continuing result. Paul was to serve as an apostle until his assignment was finished.
- The preposition εἰς used with the verb ἀφορίζω indicates the special purpose for which a person is picked from a group. Εὐαγγέλιον usually means "good news," but as a noun used with εἰς it expresses an activity. So the meaning that fits best here is "telling the good news." This was a major part of Paul's assignment as an apostle. He was to tell the good news to all people. The lack of an article is qualitative, stressing that what he had to tell was truly something good for all to hear.
- The genitive θεοῦ is not possessive since the point is not that this good news belongs to God and him alone. Rather, the genitive may be descriptive, indicating what kind of good news this is, namely, good news about God. Or it may be a genitive of source, indicating that this good news comes to all people from God. This latter would fit best with the following relative clause that speaks about the good news as something that God promised in the Scriptures through the prophets.

**Summary and Application** Paul begins this letter by stating three things about himself: (1) He is totally dedicated to serving Christ; (2) he was called by Christ to serve as a public minister of the Word; (3) the special assignment he has is to share the good news from God with all people. What Paul says about himself is something we hope all the called workers in our churches also say about themselves. Every Christian layperson can say both (1) and (3). Because of God's undeserved kindness to us in Christ, we dedicate our whole lives to serve him—and one area of service for every layperson is to share the gospel with all people.

**Romans 1:2a** ὃ προεπηγγείλατο = "*which was promised in advance*"

- The relative pronoun ὃ ties the following words to εὐαγγέλιον, its antecedent at the end of verse 1. What follows could have been put in a separate sentence. When a Greek writer chooses to tie

something onto the foregoing in this way, he does so for emphasis. He is stressing that what follows is an essential point he wants the reader to take into account when thinking about the antecedent. So Paul wants us to take special note of what he will now say about the good news from God that he is to share with all people.

- The verb προεπαγγέλλω means to “promise in advance.” The prepositional phrases that follow indicate that God was the one who did the action of this passive verb. They also tell us that “in advance” means the Old Testament time when God spoke of the coming Messiah. The aorist tense indicates simply that this was a fact, that it happened. It cannot indicate a onetime action because it is speaking of a promise that was made repeatedly by the prophets throughout the Old Testament time.

**Romans 1:2b** διὰ τῶν προφητῶν αὐτοῦ = “*through his prophets*”

- The preposition διὰ indicates the agents God used to make his promise. This is one of the expressions that indicates that Scripture is God’s Word.
- A prophet is one who speaks God’s Word. The plural “prophets” indicates that God used many men over a long period of time to speak to his people. The article tells us that these were specific men. The possessive genitive αὐτοῦ explains this by telling us that they were chosen specifically by God to be his spokesmen.

**Romans 1:2c** ἐν γραφαῖς ἁγίαις = “*in the Holy Scriptures*”

- Where did God proclaim the good news of his promise? The preposition ἐν indicates the limited sphere, the only place God spoke through his prophets.
- The word γραφαῖς means “writings.” Here the writings are the OT Scriptures. This is evident both from the fact that they contain the promise that God made in advance about the Messiah’s coming and the fact that they are called the ἁγίαις writings.
- The adjective ἁγίαις can have a number of connotations. One is to describe something set aside for sacred use. Another meaning that is related to the former is to describe something or someone as pure or perfect. The latter meaning fits best in

describing the writings in which the prophets spoke of God's promise of the Messiah. The prophets chosen by God spoke God's pure words because the Spirit guided them in what they were to write (2 Pe 1:19-21).

**Romans 1:3a** *περὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ* = “*concerning his Son*”

- In this third and final phrase modifying the main verb in this clause, Paul states that the promise God made was about (περὶ) his Son. His Son would come into the world to ransom all people from sin. This is the εὐαγγέλιον, the “good news” (v1), Paul was sent by God to share with the world.
- The article with υἱοῦ has no significance since here it is used with a proper noun. Proper nouns appear in Greek with or without an article with no apparent difference in meaning. However, the possessive adjective αὐτοῦ makes υἱοῦ quite specific. It was God's own Son who fulfilled God's promise of a Savior.
- The names Father and Son, when used of the first and second persons of the Trinity, remind us of the eternal generation of the Son by the Father (Ps 2:7; Heb 1:5). From eternity the Father and the Son have been one in essence and glory. These names also remind us that as God's one and only Son (Jn 3:16), Jesus is loved by the Father with a deep and lasting love. Giving his one and only Son as a sacrifice for sin also makes it clear how much God loves the people of the world for whom his Son died (3:16).

**Summary and Application** Paul reminds the Romans and us that the good news he proclaims is not something new. It is exactly the same good news that God spoke as a promise through the prophets in the sacred books of the OT. One can't read this verse without also being reminded of two things that are true about the Bible: (1) It is an inspired book containing pure words that God spoke through human writers; and (2) the Bible is christocentric—Christ is the heart and center of God's message in both the Old and New Testaments.