

19. June 2025

LETTER TO THE ROMANS

The obedience of faith



Balta Lelija

Having meditated on the entire Gospel of Saint John and the Acts of the Apostles, and after turning our attention to the Holy Spirit in the context of Pentecost, I would like to focus on Saint Paul's Letter to the Romans over the next few weeks.

Of all his epistles, this is the most complete and is also known as the 'Testament of Saint Paul'. We will not read the entire text, but only the most important passages that lend themselves to commentary.

I take this opportunity to recommend that you read this letter of Saint Paul in its entirety and thus put into practice the advice to read the Holy Scriptures daily, which is so beneficial.

As always, you will find at the end a link to a meditation on the Gospel or the reading of the day, for those who prefer to follow this structure.

Rom 1:1-7,13-17

Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures, the gospel concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and designated Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations, including yourselves who are called to belong to Jesus Christ; To all God's beloved in Rome, who are called to be saints. I want you to know, brethren, that I have often intended to come to you (but thus far have been prevented), in order that I may reap some harvest among you as well 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 I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome. 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. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith; as it is written, "He who through faith is righteous shall live."

According to the Acts of the Apostles, Paul was sent as a prisoner to Rome after appealing to Caesar against the accusations of the Jews in Jerusalem (Acts 25:10-11). According to the Scriptures, *there 'Paul was allowed to live by himself, with a soldier to guard him'* (Acts 28:16) and was able to preach the Gospel *'without hindrance'* for a time (v. 31). He probably wrote the Letter to the Romans during his three-month stay in Greece, specifically in Corinth, the centre of his mission in Greece (cf. Acts 20:2).

Paul begins his letter by introducing himself as an apostle appointed by the Risen Lord to proclaim the Gospel and preach obedience to the faith among the Gentiles. Here we encounter a concept that Paul will use again and again and that is important to internalise, both for our own life of faith and for the transmission of the faith. Salvation through Jesus Christ, which God's love offers us, is an undeserved gift of pure grace. But since Jesus Christ is the only way to salvation and He Himself is the truth, our response of obedience is necessary.

Therefore, it is not a matter of choosing one among many offers of salvation, from which we can select the one that pleases us most. Rather, its rejection will always have consequences. Although our Father undoubtedly waits with great patience for human beings and knows ways to offer salvation to those who have not had the grace to receive the Gospel in its authentic form, the following remains true: if someone deliberately closes himself to the truth, God cannot penetrate Him with His love or shape his life, for he has not entered into the 'obedience of faith.'

Nor can a person who remains in error assimilate God's grace. God will certainly continue to court him with His love and do everything possible to lead him to obedience of faith, but in the end it is up to each individual to respond to God's call and subordinate his life to Him.

The Christians in Rome had responded to the Lord's call, and Paul felt a deep longing to be reunited with them *“in order that I may reap some harvest among you as well 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 I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.”*

Our holy Apostle then utters a phrase that should burn in our hearts and lead us to reflection: *‘I am not ashamed of the Gospel.’*

Have we begun to be ashamed of the Gospel and no longer proclaim the Lord with full conviction? Are we ashamed to tell the whole truth to members of other religions and in the ecumenical sphere? Are we beginning to apologise in some way for being Catholic and for having called all men to the Church, while now we prefer to say that everyone can find God in their own way?

Certainly, the Gospel must not be proclaimed with a false attitude of superiority or by resorting to wrong methods. But it is a task we have received, as Paul attests in the introduction to his letter. It is the Lord who has entrusted it to us. Therefore, what the Apostle to the Gentiles writes to the Church in Rome is valid for all times:

“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. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith; as it is written, “He who through faith is righteous shall live.”

Meditation on the day's reading: <https://en.elijamission.net/the-apostles-jealousy/>

Meditation on the day's Gospel: <https://en.elijamission.net/our-father/>