

The
LEXHAM
DISCOURSE
HANDBOOK:
ROMANS

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THE LEXHAM DISCOURSE HANDBOOK: ROMANS NEW TESTAMENT
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Why a Discourse Handbook?

This project is intended to fill a very noticeable gap in exegetical resources, whether for preaching/teaching or academic projects. The missing piece is a sustained discussion about the structuring and flow of the biblical text. There are numerous studies on cultural backgrounds, historical backgrounds, theological or ethical implications, and even lexicographical or morphological issues relating to the Greek text and its translation. But what about the text itself? **What difference does it make that he said it this way as opposed to that way?** Regardless of how I might translate this conjunction or what sense I might assign it, how did the writer intend to relate what precedes with what follows? What does this portion contribute to the overall flow and structure of the discourse?

Occasionally one finds discussion of such matters, but it tends to be serendipitous rather than systematic. The goal for this series is to offer a sustained discussion of the overall flow of the discourse based on the writer's choice of **discourse devices and structuring decisions.** It will also describe the exegetical consequences of these decisions.

This undertaking is the culmination of many years of research. Foundational materials needed to be developed. How can one talk about discourse devices unless the devices are transparently accessible to the reader? The better part of two years of research was devoted to developing the Lexham Discourse Greek New Testament, an electronic database which identifies the most exegetically significant discourse devices in a way that specialists and non-specialists alike can benefit. It helps identify exegetical issues that need to be addressed in an analysis of the text. It was a necessary first step, but there was a problem. It was up to the reader to connect the dots and synthesize the data into a unified reading of the discourse. More explanation was needed.

The next step was the *Discourse Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, a resource to help readers with a traditional background in Greek grammar acquire a foundational understanding of discourse studies. Each chapter begins with how some matter was traditionally treated, and then provides linguistic principles that give insight into how and why discourse devices achieve the effects they do. The discourse grammar was an important second step, as it has opened the door for students and professors to reshape their understanding of Greek exegesis into something other than a translation exercise. But there was still a lingering problem. The book intentionally investigated only one device at a time. It was beyond the scope of an introductory volume to attempt to describe all of the interrelated machinations. Discourse can be messy at times, but understanding the unique contribution of each device will better enable us to unpack the whole. Something more was needed.

The *Lexham Discourse Handbook* series provides this final piece: a sustained, unifying analysis of how the various discourse devices function collectively; it describes the contribution of each piece to the whole. The *Handbook* selectively engages significant exegetical issues raised by commentators, but is not intended to provide a full conversation with Pauline scholarship. What do I mean by selective? Issues

directly impacted by discourse grammar, especially discussions about the structuring and organization of Romans. As will be shown in the discussion of Rom 1:1-15, most of the debates regarding the purpose and structure of Romans revolve on factors like what is signaled by a particular conjunction, or the function of expressions like οὐ θέλω δὲ ὑμᾶς ἀγνοεῖν, ἀδελφοί in Rom 1:13. This is where the foundational investment in understanding discourse grammar can pay huge dividends.

Connectives—those small particles used to signal relationships between phrases and clauses—provide some of the most significant information about how the writer intended his work to be read. C.E.B. Cranfield states:

It will perhaps not be out of place to mention here something which, while it is very obvious, is sometimes overlooked by students of the epistle—the importance of watching carefully the connectives linking the sentences. Whereas in English it is not at all unusual for sentences to be set down one after the other without connexion, in ancient Greek it was normal to link each sentence with the preceding one by means of a connective of one sort or another. The Greek custom has two great advantages: it helps the writer to think clearly and logically and it enables the reader to know what was the connexion of thought in the writer's mind between his sentences. ... But, where there is continuous argument, they are a most important clue to the author's meaning, of which full use should be made. In the exegesis of Romans one is well advised to watch the connectives with the utmost attentiveness, wherever they are present—and in the first eight chapters they nearly always are. Paul uses them competently enough.¹

Chapter 2 of *DGGNT* provides a functional description of the nine most frequently occurring connectives. Regardless of how each might be translated into English in any given context, each brings to bear a unique cognitive constraint on the relationship of what follows the connective with what precedes. As Cranfield states, “it enables the reader to know what was the connexion of thought in the writer's mind between his sentences.” Carefully and consistently attending to these constraints enables us to much more confidently navigate the maze of competing proposals regarding purpose and structure.

My analysis is based upon Greek text of the *SBLGNT*.² Consideration will be given only to textual variants which significantly impact the flow of the discourse. I recognize that this is an eclectic text, not an original autograph. However, I will treat the text as intentionally worded and intentionally structured to best accomplish Paul's purpose for writing the epistle. This means you will not find me claiming anacoluthon or some irregular emphatic usage of some kind. Instead, the *Handbook* will describe the implications of this wording of this text as it stands since this is what we have to work with. The principles I utilize could just as easily be applied to alternative readings, but my scope is intentionally limited to the eclectic text.

¹ C.E.B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, vol. 1, International Critical Commentary (London; New York: T & T Clark International, 2004), 27.

² Michael W. Holmes, ed., *The Greek New Testament: SBL Edition* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010).

An overarching principle governing my work is that “choice implies meaning.” This is not a claim that Paul sat and consciously thought about every single word before it was written. Think about the last heated discussion you had with someone. Chances are there were points where you slowed down to carefully choose your wording. You knew in your brain what you wanted to convey, and the desired impact it would have on the other person. Somewhere between your brain and the words coming out of your mouth, you did something. This something is captured by metaphors like, “what fit best” or “treading carefully.” These images describe the kind of choice I am talking about. Paul wrote the letter to accomplish certain things. The choice to word things one way versus another were calculated based on what he felt would best accomplish his goals and objectives. Since we do not have an original letter, the eclectic SBLGNT will be analyzed on this same basis, as though Paul really intended to say what he did in this particular way.

Romans 1:1-15

The opening of this letter from the apostle Paul to the believers in Rome has been the cause of extensive debates over the years, especially regarding Paul’s purpose for writing. The opening consists of a greeting section (1:1-7) and a thanksgiving section (1:8-15). As with most of Paul’s letters, he introduces many of the themes or key concepts that will be discussed later in the epistle. The greeting also serves as his business card, presenting his most relevant credentials based on where he is heading in the epistle.³ For instance the greeting in Galatians describes how he *didn’t* receive his apostleship before actually making a positive statement about it, setting the stage for him to address his apostolic authority in the body of the letter. The greeting in Romans is unique in that it is the only greeting in which Paul explicitly mentions the gospel.⁴ As in Galatians, the content of the greeting sets the stage for the themes and content that follow. Figuratively speaking, the introduction is where Paul places the major topics to be discussed on the table before he unpacks each one in more detail.

One of the most contentious debates about Romans concerns the purpose or motivation for the letter. There have been a number of competing proposals made over the years, and it is beyond the scope of this volume to tackle them all. Such diversity of opinion suggests that a single, simple answer to this question is unrealistic to expect. Furthermore, how one understands the epistle’s structure greatly influences notions about purpose. For this reason, significant attention will be devoted to structure, both at the macro- and micro-level. Each is informed by the other.

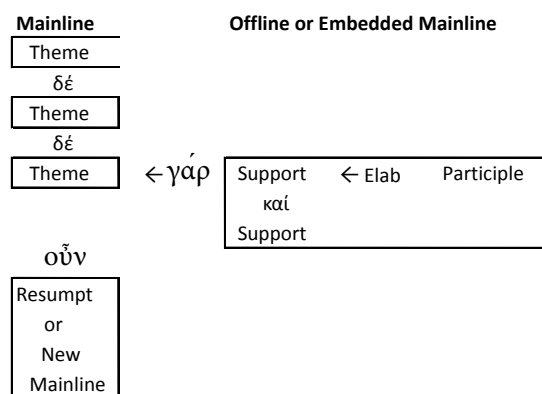
The single most significant factor influencing my analysis of Romans’ structure is my understanding of the little Greek particle γάρ, typically translated “for.” Although numerous lexical senses are postulated, I

³ Moo states, “He wanted to establish his credentials as an apostle with a worldwide commission to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ.” Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1996), 39.

⁴ Moo notes that eight of the eleven mentions of gospel occur in the introduction and conclusion of the letter. Ibid.

follow Levinsohn in claiming that “the presence of γάρ constrains the material that it introduces to be interpreted as *strengthening* some aspect of the previous assertion.”⁵ In other words, the writer’s use of this particle is interpreted as explicit instruction to the reader that what follows is offline support material, no matter how important it might seem. Labeling something as offline is not to say it is unimportant. On the contrary, consider how many standard memory verses begin with “for”! The point here is paying attention to whether the mainline is advancing or not. By definition, strengthening material fleshes out some aspect of the previous assertion, but it does not advance the development of the discourse.

This first section of Romans (1:1-15) contains two instances of γάρ; there are seven more in the balance of the first chapter. Thus this material is—by definition—represents a step offline to strengthen what immediately precedes. The resumption of a previous mainline theme is signaled by other means, typically by οὖν.⁶ If one were to chart thematic progression of a discourse, continuation in a single column would represent advancing the mainline theme. The boxes enclosing cells or groups of cells delimit thematic units within the argument. Offline material would be represented by a shift to the right, moving out of the current mainline column into an offline column [e.g. ← γάρ or ← Elab(oration) below]. The offline might be a simple digression; it might also begin a new, embedded mainline. Resumption of a previous theme would be represented by a return to the same column as the suspended mainline theme. Here is a sample chart:

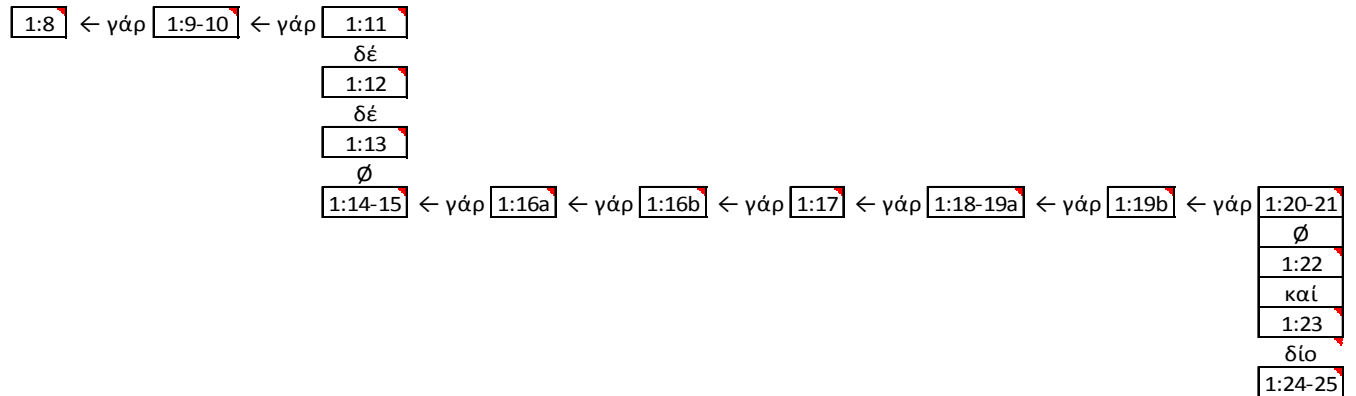


One cannot determine how far a strengthening section introduced by γάρ extends: it may be only one clause or begin an embedded mainline. The latter is what we find in the book of Romans. How one treats strengthening material has significant implications for discussions about the epistle’s purpose. The following table provides an overview of the flow of Paul’s argument from the perspective of discourse grammar. The Greek connective joining clauses is provided for clarity, with the null symbol (∅) representing asyndeton. Formally speaking, there are no indicators of a resumption of the mainline theme

⁵ Stephen H. Levinsohn, *Discourse Features of New Testament Greek: A Coursebook on the Information Structure of New Testament Greek*, 2nd ed. (Dallas: SIL International, 2000), 91, emphasis his.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 126–127.

of vv. 11-15, only further digression into strengthening material. Romans 1:9-10 serves to strengthen the claim of v. 8, whereas vv. 11 ff. strengthen vv. 9-10, and so on.



The formal structuring of the introduction has significant implications for the overall structure of Romans. Firstly, Paul's stated desire to visit the Romans in v. 11 begins a short mainline that extends through v. 15, which is then strengthened by a series of assertions about the gospel beginning in v. 16. The formal structuring of this brief mainline about the visit casts it as more thematically salient than the strengthening material about the gospel which follows. In other words, Paul has structured the epistle so that his desire to come to Rome is the last mainline assertion. What follows is offline/background material that strengthens this assertion.⁷

If Paul's desire to visit represents the mainline of the discourse, then what does he hope to obtain from his visit? Many have observed the contradictory nature between his desire for fruit among the Romans expressed in 1:12-13 and the claims of chapter 15 about not building on another's foundation and his plans for work in Spain. Schreiner understands Paul's desire to preach the gospel in Rome (v. 15) as primarily evangelistic: "Why does Paul in chapter 1 emphasize his desire to win converts in Rome, while in chapter 15 he stresses that he does not want to build on another's foundation and his aspiration is to use Rome as a base for the Spanish mission?"⁸ But what exactly does preaching the gospel entail? Is it necessarily evangelistic? The answer lies in Paul's qualification of fruit in v. 13 as "also among the rest of the Gentiles." Is he here referring to converts or possibly also to missionary support?

A solution to this conundrum can be found in slightly modifying Schreiner's proposal. He states, "If he had mentioned his desire to use Rome as the home base for the Spanish mission in the first chapter, it

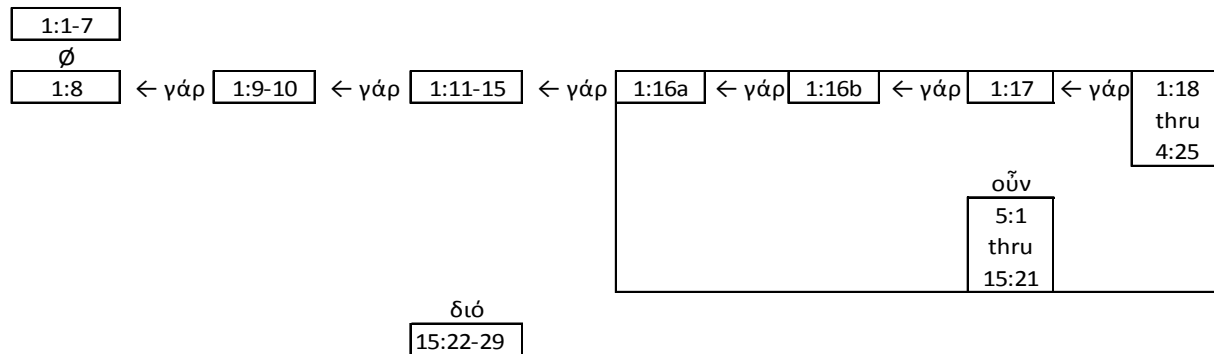
⁷ Cranfield seems to recognize the implications of the structuring, i.e. viewing Paul's desire to visit as the formal purpose of the letter. But if this is valid, how does one reconcile the balance of the letter? "What is less easy to understand is why he included 1:16b-15:13—and this precisely—in the letter. Or, to put the problem differently, what was it that determined the contents, the form, the emphases, of this main body of the epistle?" Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 1:23.

⁸ Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 54-55.

would have diverted his focus away from his thanks and prayer for the Roman believers.”⁹ Framing the body of the letter as strengthening his stated desire to visit accomplishes something significant. Whatever specific issues that Paul intends to correct in the church are cast as secondary to his desire to visit. His exposition of the gospel message and its implications for Jew and Gentile alike (Rom 1-11) lays the groundwork for treating occasional issues like the weak vs. strong in Rom 14. Paul has chosen an *indirect* approach, in stark contrast to a letter such as Galatians or 1 Corinthians.

Furthermore, rhetorically backgrounding Paul’s real intention for writing is consistent with his apparent vagueness about the nature of the fruit he wants to bear or the identity of the weak and strong. The backgrounding and ambiguity point toward an intentionally indirect strategy. Had Paul made more specific comments in chapter 1—regarding not building on another’s foundation, or wanting support for his mission to Spain—it is unlikely he would have gained the same kind of hearing from his audience. Vagary allows for far wider application by appealing to our human inclination to think more highly of ourselves than we ought. Although he discourages this “thinking more highly” in Romans 12:3, his intentional ambiguity in Rom 14 and elsewhere appears to exploit it.

Paul’s lack of personal relationship with the Roman believers would also encourage use of an indirect strategy. Moo observes, “If Paul is to gain a sympathetic ear for “his” gospel from the Roman Christians and enlist their support for his Spanish mission (15:24), he must exercise tact in asserting his authority.”¹⁰ Recognizing the indirect approach of the letter can explain many of the contrasts with Paul’s other letters. These factors will be unpacked more fully in the relevant sections, but they can account for the apparent anomalies of Rom 1 as rhetorically motivated to accomplish Paul’s larger goals for his relationship with the Romans. He is able to build effective rapport through his “strengthening material” (Rom 1:16 ff.) before more clearly stating his real intention, and correcting any occasional issues present in the Roman church. Here is a higher-level snapshot of the epistle’s structure, showing where the initial mainline of 1:11-15 is resumed in 15:22.



⁹ Ibid., 55.

¹⁰ Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 60.

The tension Schreiner observes between these two portions of the same mainline theme can be reasonably understood as a natural consequence of Paul's feigning one purpose before more specifically reframing it.

His emphasis on preaching the gospel in chapter 1 stems from the gospel's thematic importance, and ostensibly the Romans' need to better understand it in order to bring about the "obedience of faith" Paul envisions (1:5). Thus, chapter 1 presents a rhetorically motivated purpose for the letter, whereas chapter 15 more candidly presents his real goal. While there is an apparent contradiction in claims, it can be reasonably explained as a rhetorical strategy.

Greeting: 1:1-7

Paul has adapted the characteristic epistolary greeting in most of his letters into more of a thematic introduction to this letter.¹¹ He utilizes several thematic highlighting devices to set the stage for what follows. This consists of characterizing himself in a particular way, and doing the same to his audience. The characterizations are based upon the major themes that he will be discussing in the epistle.

1.1 Παῦλος δούλος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ, κλητὸς ἀπόστολος ἀφορισμένος εἰς εὐαγγέλιον θεοῦ. "Paul" would have been sufficient to identify the writer, especially since the information that follows does little to narrow down a hypothetical list of Pauls. The appositional phrases that follow his proper name shape the readers' mental picture of him, influencing how they would have viewed him. For example, I could be introduced as scholar-in-residence, dad, husband, carpenter, fly-fisherman, cyclist, believer in Jesus, or any manner of other things, depending upon the context. If the context were to change, so too would the most relevant description. The same holds true for Paul's use of these appellations in the greetings of his epistles. So rather than revealing which "Paul" wrote the letter, these descriptions serve a thematic purpose: **shaping our mental picture of Paul.**

In his letters, Paul builds different portraits of himself depending on where he intends to go in the discourse that follows. In Romans he casts himself as a servant Christ Jesus, a called apostle, and set apart for the gospel of God. This is the only greeting of Paul's letters that makes specific reference to the gospel. Including it here fits well with the thematic focus of the letter that follows.

1.2 ὁ προεπηγγείλατο διὰ τῶν προφητῶν αὐτοῦ ἐν γραφαῖς ἀγίαις. As with Paul's identity, there is little need here to specify which gospel he is referring to. Rather v. 2 characterizes the gospel in the manner most consistent with Paul's purposes. This verse casts the gospel not as something new, but as something long expected from and well attested by the Scriptures.

1.3 περὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ. This prepositional phrase provides further thematic characterization of the gospel, this time focused on its central figure. In contrast to "Paul" and "gospel," the thematic description here precedes the explicit identification of the participant, delayed until the very end of v. 4. This strategy

¹¹ Regarding the greeting, Moo notes, "Paul expands this form considerably in all his letters but nowhere more than in Romans." *ibid.*, 39.

could potentially cause confusion over whom he is referring to; the rhetorical benefit of the delay is to build toward a climax until the identity is finally revealed. The repetition of the article τοῦ in this phrase and the next two constrains each of the statements to be processed as distinct parts rather than as one long noun phrase. The referent is generically identified as God’s son, highlighting his divine relationship to the Father.¹²

τοῦ γενομένου ἐκ σπέρματος Δαυὶδ κατὰ σάρκα. Next comes a human connection to the line of David. Referring to Jesus as “born a descendant of David” would have been sufficient to provide an earthly, mortal connection, particularly in opposition to the divine connection immediately preceding. The phrase κατὰ σάρκα highlights an additional thematic detail. In Romans 1-8, Paul maintains an important distinction between the inner person which is redeemed, and the outer, mortal part—the flesh.¹³ The flesh is where sin resides, and will not receive lasting redemption until the resurrection from the dead. Most often this opposition is expressed as the spirit versus the flesh.

The significance of this opposition is most clearly seen in Rom 8:3: “For what was impossible for the law, in that it was weak through the flesh, God did. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and concerning sin, he condemned sin in the flesh.”¹⁴ In order for sin and death to be utterly defeated, the battle needed to be fought on sin’s home turf: the flesh. Paul consistently treats the flesh as the locus of sin, hence the caveat in Rom 7:18 about good not living in him, “that is, in my flesh.” We see the same kind of distinction in 8:3, where God sends His Son not just in the likeness of flesh, but of sinful flesh. The addition of κατὰ σάρκα here in Rom 1:3 begins Paul’s introduction of this thematically significant concept in preparation for later development.

1.4 τοῦ ὀρισθέντος υἱοῦ θεοῦ ἐν δυνάμει κατὰ πνεῦμα ἀγιωσύνης ἐξ ἀναστάσεως νεκρῶν. This is the third thematic characterization of the yet-to-be-named person (see first comment on 1:3), describing more specifically what was accomplished while he was in the flesh. The reference in 1:3a to Jesus as God’s Son is strengthened by relating the consequences of his resurrection from the dead. He is now declared/appointed to be God’s Son according to the Holy Spirit. While Sonship was a part of Jesus’ preexistence, his death and resurrection are offered as attesting evidence of it.

Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν. It is only after three different untitled portraits of Jesus that we finally encounter an explicit and unambiguous reference to Him. The delayed introduction has the rhetorical effect of creating suspense. To His proper name is added a title which relates Him to Paul (and his readers): “our Lord.”

¹² See comments by *ibid.*, 44.

¹³ Moo treats flesh and spirit as referring to distinct eras in salvation history. See *ibid.*, 49–50.

¹⁴ W. Hall Harris, III et al., eds., *The Lexham English Bible* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2012).

1.5 δι' οὗ ἐλάβομεν χάριν καὶ ἀποστολήν. Jesus is recharacterized yet again as the source of grace and apostleship. None of these appositional descriptions are necessary to correctly identify Jesus. Instead the information shapes our mental picture of him, based on where Paul is headed in the discourse. Of all the different ways we might think of Him, the added descriptions ensure we focus on the details Paul views as relevant.

εἰς ὑπακοήν πίστεως ἐν πᾶσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν. This phrase provides the rationale for the grace and apostleship Paul has received: the obedience of faith. This obedience of faith contrasts with the more generic reference to the Romans' faith in 1:8 (contrast this with Paul's strong affirmation of a church's obedience in Phil 2:12). It also foreshadows Paul's extended exposition on righteousness that comes by faith and obedience to God rather than obedience to sinful flesh. Moo comments, "Paul called men and women to a faith that was always inseparable from obedience—for the Savior in whom we believe is nothing less than our Lord—and to an obedience that could never be divorced from faith—for we can obey Jesus as Lord only when we have given ourselves to him in faith. Viewed in this light, the phrase captures the full dimension of Paul's apostolic task, a task that was not confined to initial evangelization but that included also the building up and firm establishment of churches."¹⁵ This mention in the greeting section opens the door for later elaboration on the same concept.

The context of this obedience of faith is all the Gentiles, a more specific statement than "saints," which could equally refer to Jewish or Gentile believers. This description casts the Gentiles as the broader backdrop for the Roman church.¹⁶

1.6 ἐν οἷς ἐστε καὶ ὑμεῖς κλητοὶ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. Paul now thematically connects the Roman believers to the preceding context using adverbial καί. Two different connections are possible. One connects the Roman church to the broader Gentile group referenced in v. 5. Although this is the nearest connection, it fails to account for the presence of κλητοί. It is more probable that the thematic connection is back to Paul's own calling referenced in 1:1.¹⁷ Not only has he received a calling as a servant of Jesus, the Romans have received a comparable one, though without any reference to apostleship.

1.7 πᾶσιν τοῖς οὖσιν ἐν Ῥώμῃ ἀγαπητοῖς θεοῦ, κλητοῖς ἁγίοις. This is the first direct reference to the Roman believers. They have been characterized as "also called of Jesus Christ" (1:6), now they are recast as beloved of God and called to be saints/holy.

χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη ἀπὸ θεοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. The formal greeting wishes the church grace and peace, attributed to the Father and the Son. God is further characterized as "our Father" creating a personal connection. The reference to Jesus is more a formal title: Lord Jesus Christ.

¹⁵ Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 53–54.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 53.

¹⁷ "As Paul has been "called" to be an apostle (v. 1), so the Roman Christians have been 'called' to be people who name Jesus as Christ and Lord." *ibid.*

Thanksgiving: 1:8-15

The thanksgiving section is a standard part of Paul's letters (except Galatians), where the apostle thanks God for specific things about the church to whom he is writing. Romans is somewhat uncharacteristic in that Paul digresses into an extended strengthening section from the mainline theme of the section. He begins by thanking God for their faith (v. 8), which represents the theme of the section. His thanksgiving is strengthened in vv. 9-10 with how he constantly makes mention of the Roman church in his prayers. This represents a step off the current mainline into offline material. He moves further offline in v. 11 by using γάρ to introduce his desire to visit, which casts it as strengthening material. More strengthening material is added in the following paragraph beginning in v. 16, which is where most understand the body of the letter to begin. However, it is critical to take note of Paul's choice to cast vv. 16 off as offline support for the assertions of 11-15, which in turn strengthens the assertion of vv. 9-10.

So what are the larger interpretive implications of this series of digressions introduced by γάρ for the rest of the letter? Paul has structured this section as supporting the thanksgiving, which is in turn supported by what is typically understood as the body of the letter. This means that Paul's stated desire to visit Rome is the last assertion on an embedded mainline, supporting the thanksgiving. It also means that the whole letter—with all of its amazing doctrine—is structured as offline material rather than as beginning a new theme. It forms an embedded mainline, but strengthens rather than advances the last mainline assertion. There is a unifying, mainline theme running through 1:16-15:22, but this entire section also provides the rationale for a higher-level mainline, namely his desire to visit the church at Rome. The specific occasion for this visit is only spelled out at the end of the epistle.¹⁸

Paul's structuring of the discourse makes his teaching much less direct. Instead of writing to correct misconceptions about the gospel and its implications for Jew and Gentile, he is writing to announce his intention to visit. The teaching that follows simply provides the support for wanting to do so. Thus Romans stands in stark contrast with letters like 1 Corinthians or Galatians where correction and exhortation are more directly addressed. Structuring Romans in this way has a disarming effect, all because of his use of the little conjunction γάρ in this section.

1:8 Πρῶτον μὲν

This expression signals that there will be some correlation with a related point in the following discourse. There is no need to mention a "first" if there is no second, right? The conjunction μὲν is prototypically

¹⁸ Schreiner rightly recognizes a marked shift in stated purposes between this section and the end of the epistle. This shift need not be viewed as contradictory, but may reasonably be understood as rhetorically motivated. It is a calculated delay. See Schreiner, *Romans*, 54–55. He summarizes saying, "Nonetheless, Rom. 15 qualifies Paul's desire to preach the gospel in Rome. He was not engaging in establishing the church as he had elsewhere, and thus he intended to stay in Rome only long enough to rally support for the Spanish mission."

associated with an accompanying δέ to create a **counterpoint**-point set.¹⁹ Yet most commentators have difficulty identifying a related counterpart. Alford associates the μέν here with the δέ in v. 13, however there is nothing (most typically οὖν) to signal a return from the offline material.²⁰

So why would Paul use these forward-pointing signals, but never provide a counterpart? The standard grammatical explanation is called anacoluthon, what Turner describes as “chiefly in Paul’s letters ... whereby the original sentence construction is forgotten after an insertion.”²¹ In other words, he intended to make a related point, but something distracted him from returning to make it. Another explanation specific to μέν is the claim it is “emphatic.”²²

These explanations ignore the rhetorical effect created by the inclusion of this expression. It adds to the expectation that another thanksgiving statement follows the material introduced in v. 11, further disarming any concerns. Instead of returning to more thanksgiving, Paul continues to move further off this mainline.

In Rom 3:2 Paul uses the same technique to answer the rhetorical question about there being an advantage for Jews.²³ Here again, Paul uses πρῶτον μέν as though he is going to list off more than just the one benefit, only no more are listed. More will be said about this issue in the discussion of Rom 3:2. Claiming the usage is a mistake ignores its rhetorical potential to disarm opposition to what follows, as though he will return to more thanksgiving following the offline material.

1:9 μάρτυς γάρ μου ἔστιν ὁ θεός

Γάρ once again signals a transition offline, strengthening his assertion about his giving thanks to God. There is also a metacomment, what form-critics have typically called a disclosure formula.²⁴ It directs attention to the subordinate clause at the end of v. 9. Claiming that God is his witness adds authority to

¹⁹ Steven E. Runge, *Discourse Grammar of the Greek New Testament: A Practical Introduction for Teaching and Exegesis* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2010), 73–82.

²⁰ Henry Alford, *Alford’s Greek Testament: An Exegetical and Critical Commentary*, 7th ed. (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010), 315.

²¹ James Hope Moulton and Nigel Turner, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek: Syntax*, vol. 3 (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1963), 342.

²² Robertson specifically cites Rom 1:8 stating “there is no hint of other grounds of thanksgiving. This instance may be a change of thought on Paul’s part (anacoluthon), or it may be the original use of μέν, meaning “first of all in truth.” A.T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1923), 1152.

²³ For a similar proposal see Schreiner, *Romans*, 56; Moo only gives consideration to anacoluthon or assigning primary importance as possibilities. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 57.

²⁴ Runge, *Discourse Grammar*, 101–106.

what Paul says.²⁵ But it also delays what he is about to say: making constant mention of the Roman believers.

ὃ λατρεύω ἐν τῷ πνεύματί μου

This relative clause is “non-restrictive;” it does not narrow down which god Paul is serving (“Oh, right, *that* one.”) It adds thematic detail about God, based on how Paul wants us to conceptualize him in this particular context. He is no longer portrayed as “our Father” (1:7) or some other possible role like “maker of heaven and earth.” He is described relationally, as the one whom Paul serves.

Another important facet provided is Paul’s representation of himself. In Acts 27:23 and 2 Tim 1:3 the same form of the verb characterizes his servant relationship to God, but without any further detail. A significant addition is given in Rom 1:9: serving God in his spirit.

Paul maintains an important distinction in Romans between a person’s flesh and their spirit. The spirit refers to that which is redeemed (Rom 8:14-16); the flesh/body is where sin resides, it awaits resurrection for redemption and glorification (Rom 8:12-13, 17, 23; cf. comments on Rom 1:3 regarding σάρξ). Characterizing his service to God as “in his spirit” evokes the counterpart of this opposition, service in the flesh. The presence of the personal pronoun μου excludes possible reference to the Holy Spirit.²⁶ So why add this detail about how he serves God? Another opportunity to promote an important conceptual opposition: the flesh versus the spirit.

τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ

There is a change of reference here from “Jesus Christ” in Rom 1:8 to a title explicitly relating Jesus to God. Since “Jesus Christ” lacks a possessive pronoun or family connection, it provides no explicit connection to another participant. Changing to “his Son” creates a connection to God, and constrains us to now view Jesus as “son” rather than as Christ. This places God in the spotlight as the center of attention, which is consistent with other factors in the context.

ὡς ἀδιαλείπτως μνησίαν ὑμῶν ποιῶμαι...

Verse 9 began with a metacomment highlighting this as an important proposition. Although syntactically subordinated, this clause is logically the main proposition introduced by the metacomment. Metacomments serve as packaging for important content, helping readers prioritize the relative importance of information in one clause compared to another. Placing the metacomment at the beginning of the verse followed by thematic information, delays the disclosure of the main proposition.

²⁵ Moo states, “Since the ‘witness formula’ that introduces the verse is used by Paul when he is particularly concerned to attest to the truth of what he is saying, it would seem that Paul is eager that the Romans know of his heartfelt concern for them and desire to see them.” Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 58.

²⁶ Ibid.

1:10 δεόμενος εἴ πως ἤδη ποτὲ εὐδοθήσομαι

This participial clause elaborates on making constant mention of the believers in Paul's prayers. It describes more specifically what he is praying. The use of ἤδη here implies frustration or impatience based on its reference to the past, i.e. that it already would have happened.²⁷ It changes what might have been a simple desire for the future into something far more probable. Placing ἤδη ποτὲ before the verb results in emphasis rather than creating a temporal frame of reference.²⁸

The metacomment attracted attention to Paul's making constant mention, whereas this clause describes what he is praying, viz. that he'd at last succeed at doing something. This something is expressed by ἐλθεῖν πρὸς ὑμᾶς at the end of the verse. Its introduction is delayed by an intervening prepositional phrase, delaying the disclosure of what Paul is so desirous of doing.

ἐν τῷ θελήματι τοῦ θεοῦ

Paul has attempted unsuccessfully to visit the believers in Rome, and most likely more than once. Introducing the notion of hoping to finally do this according to the will of God implies that his past attempts were not according to God's will. More detail is provided in Rom 1:13 about the cause of his delay. The reference to God's will casts his past efforts in a bad light; yet at the same time it mitigates his responsibility for failing to visit.

1:11 ἐπιποθῶ γὰρ ἰδεῖν ὑμᾶς

The use of γὰρ here does not advance the mainline theme of hoping to visit; instead is offline material providing a rationale for his desire to visit. So just as Rom 1:9-10 shifts from the mainline of v. 8 to offline strengthening material, v. 11 shifts further off the mainline of v. 8. We now have strengthening material supporting other strengthening material. This offline material becomes an embedded mainline that extends through Rom 1:15.

1:12 τοῦτο δέ ἐστιν

This is essentially a repairing of the preceding clause, as though Paul somehow misstated something. However, the conjunction used is δέ rather than ἀλλά. This constrains v. 12 to be understood as a distinct point rather than as correcting or replacing what precedes.²⁹

²⁷ See *ibid.*, 59, n. 29.

²⁸ Runge, *Discourse Grammar*, 191–195.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 92–93; This is consistent with Moo's observation: "It is not that Paul wants to withdraw this statement but that he wants to expand it by recognizing the mutual gain that will accrue from his visit." Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 60.

Repairing misstatements is much more common in spoken discourse than in written discourse, due to the less-planned and more spontaneous nature of speaking. As a result, repairing in written discourse is more often rhetorically motivated. Based on the well-crafted nature of Romans, τοῦτο δέ ἐστίν is best understood as intentional redirection. Paul uses this phrase to transition from a one-sided motive to a reciprocal one. This would dispel misperceptions about how his apostolic authority might be exercised during a visit.³⁰ The first statement is consistent with what they might have expected from the apostle, whereas the repaired statement in v. 12 casts him in a much more congenial light. Whatever the case, there are sound reasons for understanding v. 12 as something other than an innocent correction.

ὑμῶν τε καὶ ἐμοῦ

This noun phrase is not required to explain ἀλλήλοις. Paul is the only named author, so a first person plural pronoun we/us is most naturally understood as referring to Paul and the Roman believers. Explicit mention both parties contributes further to the sense of mutuality.³¹ Τέ thematically connects the two even more closely than simply using καί.

1:13 οὐ θέλω δὲ ὑμᾶς ἀγνοεῖν, ἀδελφοί...

Δέ signals a new point being added to the strengthening material begun in v. 11. It features a metacomment and a redundant form of address, devices which draw attention to the subordinate clause introduced by ὅτι. They are typically associated with a bigger transition than just fleshing out what was stated in 1:10. Despite the overlapping content between these verses, the devices magnify the transition, marking this point as particularly important.

πολλάκις προεθέμην ἐλθεῖν πρὸς ὑμᾶς, καὶ ἐκωλύθη ἄχρι τοῦ δεῦρο

This is the new point highlighted by the metacomment and redundant form of address. The proposition fleshes out the sentiment suggested by πως ἤδη ποτὲ (1:10). Including ἄχρι τοῦ δεῦρο implies that whatever barriers that may have prevented past visits have now been removed.

ἵνα τινὰ καρπὸν σχῶ

³⁰ Moo states, “What is remarkable about this section is a certain awkwardness on Paul’s part in stating his reasons for wanting to come to Rome. After mentioning his wish to strengthen the Romans’ faith (v. 11), Paul almost corrects himself, acknowledging that he anticipates a mutual benefit (v. 12). This note should not be seen as mere rhetorical flourish—as if Paul did not really believe that the Romans could contribute anything to his own Christian walk. Nevertheless, it is unparalleled in Paul’s other letters. Such hesitation to assert his authority (cf. also 15:14–17) may reflect his desire to tread warily in light of doubts among the Roman Christians about his message and ministry.” Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 56.

³¹ Barrett states, “The stress falls on the mutuality of what will take place when Paul visits Rome.” Charles Kingsley Barrett, *The Epistle to the Romans*, Black’s New Testament Commentary (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), 23.

This clause presents his rationale for visiting, building on the statements in Rom 1:11. Schreiner understands “fruit” as referring to new converts,³² but this understanding of fruit is not without its problems. The crux of the matter hinges on Paul’s conception of the gospel and the fruit that is obtained from preaching it. He uses “gospel” in Phil 1:27 more broadly to describe godly living, and “fruit” in Phil 4:17 to refer to missionary support: ἀλλὰ ἐπιζητῶ τὸν καρπὸν τὸν πλεονάζοντα εἰς λόγον ὑμῶν. Alford suggests it refers to the produce of their life lived to God, referencing Rom 15:16 and Phil 1:22.³³ Barrett too takes a broader view: “But what does preaching the Gospel mean? What is the Gospel (cf. v. 1)? Paul begins at once to answer these questions, and is not done with them until the epistle is at an end.”³⁴

A narrow understanding of gospel and fruit—as primarily referring to evangelism and new converts—results in the tension Schreiner sees between Paul’s stated purpose in chapter 1 compared to chapter 15. In contrast, Moo sees a broader reference here to both evangelization and strengthening of the Romans’ faith.³⁵ Without more specification it is impossible to know Paul’s exact intention here. On this view, the specific fruit Paul intends is left ambiguous until Rom 15, where he makes clear he is seeking support for his mission to Spain. The use of ambiguity here is consistent with other rhetorical choices observed so far in chapter 1.

καὶ ἐν ὑμῖν καθὼς καὶ ἐν τοῖς λοιποῖς...

The adverbial καί explicitly correlates the Roman recipients with the nations/Gentiles to whom Paul has been preaching. The use of λοιποῖς implies that both groups share a common trait: being Gentiles. This thematic connection would not have been present without λοιποῖς.³⁶ So far, the addressees of the letter have been referred to as those in Rome, loved of God, and saints (1:7). There has been no characterization of them as either Jew or Gentile. If Paul had said “that I might have some fruit among you as among the Gentiles,” it would likely have cast the Roman church as Jewish.

The decision to include “Gentile” necessarily results in a corresponding classification of the Romans. Reference to the “other Gentiles” characterizes the Romans as Gentile unless ἔθνεσιν is taken broadly to

³² “A reference to new converts is included in the phrase ‘in order that I should obtain fruit among you also’ (v. 13). The evangelistic thrust of Paul’s desire to visit Rome is confirmed in verse 15. He was eager ‘to preach the gospel to those in Rome.’ Why does Paul in chapter 1 emphasize his desire to win converts in Rome, while in chapter 15 he stresses that he does not want to build on another’s foundation and his aspiration is to use Rome as a base for the Spanish mission?” Schreiner, *Romans*, 54–55.

³³ Alford, *Alford’s Greek Testament*, 2: 318.

³⁴ Barrett, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 27.

³⁵ Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 60; regarding the reference in 1:15 he states, “But it is more natural to take ‘you’ to refer to the Roman Christians; in this case, ‘preach the gospel’ will refer to the ongoing work of teaching and discipleship that builds on initial evangelization.” *ibid.*, 63.

³⁶ “By adding the phrase ‘as among the rest of the Gentiles,’ Paul makes clear again that he views the Roman Christians as belonging to a ‘Gentile’ church.” Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 60.

include the Jewish nation, which seems unlikely.³⁷ The wording characterizes the Romans as primarily Gentile, but characterizations can easily change depending on the writer's purposes in a given context. For now the Romans are correlated with "the rest of the Gentiles."

1:15 οὕτως

Resumes the previous theme of wanting to visit them, interrupted by the description of Paul's obligation to preach (v. 14).³⁸

καὶ ὑμῖν τοῖς ἐν Ῥώμῃ

This expression is fronted for emphasis, marking it as the most important part of the proposition. The adverbial καί creates a thematic correlation with those Paul is obligated to preach to in v. 14. The expression τοῖς ἐν Ῥώμῃ is not needed; the identity of ὑμῖν is already clear from the preceding context. The repetition more specifically focuses attention on the Roman church following Paul's reference to his broader ministry.

³⁷ Godet states, "No reader free from prepossession will fail to see here the evident proof of the Gentile origin of the great majority of the Christians of Rome. To understand by ἔθνη, nations in general, including the Jews as well, is not only contrary to the uniform sense of the word (see ver. 5), but also to the subdivision into Greeks and Barbarians given in the following verse." Frédéric Louis Godet, *Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans*, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1890), 147; See also Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 61.

³⁸ See Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 1:85.