Translation of Romans 1:1-17

This is my attempt to translate Romans 1:1-17 from the Greek text. I am using UBS4 (NA27) as the source, which is a “critical text” that combines the best readings of all available Greek New Testament manuscripts. When I translate, I use a two-step process: First I attempt to capture the sense of the Greek phrasing in an essentially literal fashion. This is usually not very good English, so the second step is to transform the stilted English into a more readable, dynamic rendering.

There are a few conventions that I find useful in my first step of translation. Occasionally, some words in the Greek are implied but not explicitly present in the text, so English words have to be added in order to clarify the meaning; in such cases, I place square brackets around the English words that I have added. Also, the written Greek language has features that allow it to emphasize (or highlight) certain words within a sentence (English cannot do this without special fonts), so I have placed highlighted words in bold font. In cases where the text is poetic, I often use an italic font (especially in the second, dynamic rendering).

Translation Step 1 (Literal):

1 Paul, subservient to Christ Jesus, a summoned apostle, having been set apart for God’s good news— 2 which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures— 3 concerning His Son, who had come from David’s descendents in regard to the flesh, 4 who was appointed with power as the Son of God in regard to the spirit of holiness, by means of the resurrection of the dead—Jesus Christ our Lord— 5 through whom we received the grace of apostleship for the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for the sake of His name, 6 among whom you also are summoned by Jesus Christ.

7 To all those who are in Rome: loved by God, summoned, special [people]; grace [be] to you, and also peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

8 First, I give thanks to my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is being proclaimed throughout the entire world. 9 For God is my witness, whom I am serving with my spirit in the good news of His Son, how I always make unceasing mention of you 10 at the time of my prayers, pleading [that] if by any means now at last I will be given success by God's will to come to you. 11 For I deeply desire to see you, so that I might share some spiritual gift for the purpose of strengthening you— 12 that is, being mutually encouraged by each other's faith—both yours and mine.

13 Now I do not want you to be ignorant, brothers, that frequently I intended to come to you—although I have been prevented until now—so that I might also have some fruit among you just as among other Gentiles: 14 I am obligated, not only to the Greeks, but also to the native peoples; not only to the wise, but also to the foolish. 15 So I [am] eager to preach the good news also to you who are in Rome.

16 For I am not ashamed of this good news, because it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes: not only first to the Jew, but also to the Greek. 17 The righteousness of God is being revealed in it by means of faith [and] leading to faith, as it is written, “Now the righteous [one] by means of faith shall live.”

Notes:

(v.4) “the Spirit of holiness” — This is not the usual phrase for “Holy Spirit,” but it is possible that it is a literal rendering of a typical Hebrew phrase for God’s Spirit (Psa 51:11; Isa 63:10-11).

(v.5) “the grace of apostleship” — Literally, “grace and apostleship,” this is a hendiadys (i.e., an expression using two words to convey one concept). An English example of a hendiadys is “the cold and the wind,” which would normally be understood as “the cold wind” or “the windy cold.”

(v.7) “grace” — This word (charis in Greek) is related to the traditional “greeting” (chairein in Greek) found in most letters, so Paul is employing a sort of wordplay.

(v.14) “Greeks … native peoples; wise … foolish” — Paul probably intended each pair of terms to designate all of Gentile humanity, divided according to cultural criteria. Many of the Romans would place themselves in the first class of each pair; thus in Rom. 1:22 Paul will refer to those who are “wise” by virtue of their own thoughts.

(v.17) “revealed” — Paul might be speaking about how the gospel makes known to us (or informs us) of God’s righteousness, or he might be claiming that the gospel is the means whereby God’s righteousness is manifested or brought into existence.
I, Paul, have been closely bonded with Christ Jesus and was summoned by Him to be an apostle. I was redirected for God’s purposes regarding the “good news”— an announcement that He promised ahead of time in the Holy Scriptures by His prophets— an announcement concerning His Son, who has come to us as a descendant of King David, as a real human; who was given authority as the Son of God from the Holy Spirit. 

This news was exemplified in the resurrection of the dead, specifically the resurrection of Jesus Christ our Lord. Through Christ we received the grace of apostleship among all the Gentiles for His sake so that we might encourage an obedience that is expressed in faith; and you are also among those who are summoned by Jesus Christ.

I am writing to all of you in Rome: you are loved by God, invited by Him, and special to Him. May His grace be yours, and may the peace of God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ also be yours.

Above all else, I am continually grateful to my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is being proclaimed throughout the entire world. God knows, as I serve Him with all of my being, absorbed in the good news of His Son, that I never fail to mention you when I pray, and I beg Him to allow me to visit you by any means possible. For I deeply desire to see you, so that I might encourage you spiritually and that you might be strengthened— in fact, you and I might encourage each other's faith.

Friends, I don’t want you to be in the dark about my intentions to visit you: I have been prevented until now, so that my visit might stimulate the same sort of results that have been produced among other peoples. You see, I have a commitment to the native peoples as well as the “Greeks,” and also to those who are regarded as foolish as well as to those who consider themselves wise. This purpose of mine urges me on to preach the good news also to you who are in Rome.

This good news is nothing to be ashamed of; it is the very power of God to bring about salvation to everyone who believes: first it was offered to Jews, and now it is also offered to the Greek world. The good news reveals the righteousness of God so that people advance from their existing faith (especially the Jewish faith) toward greater faith (particularly among the Gentiles). This is just as it was written [Habakkuk 2:4], “Anyone who is righteous by means of faith shall live.”

References: