

ROMANS

CHAPTER ONE

Text: Romans 1:1

General theme: Paul's Credentials

Homiletical outline of the verse:

- A. **His second name:** Paul
- B. **His servanthood:** a bondservant of Jesus Christ
- C. **His status:** called *to be* an apostle
- D. **His separation:** separated to the gospel of God.

Summary of section: The opening words of Romans 1:1-17 break nicely into three parts: verses 1 to 7; verses 8 to 15; and verses 16 and 17. Interestingly, the first seven verses (which form the introduction to this epistle, and are a summary of the entire book), constitute a single sentence in the Greek text. Perhaps Paul wrote this way from sheer excitement. He was so thrilled about the gospel that his words gushed forth abundantly! Additionally, this is his longest and most formal introduction in any of his letters, which might be due to the fact that he is writing to a church which he neither founded nor visited.

Exegetical & Practical Insights:

In this verse, Paul sets forth his credentials as a minister of Christ:

Obs. 1- That the name **Paul** (his official Roman name) is derived from a Latin word which means "the little one."¹ Note his humility in putting forth this name. Even though his Jewish name was Saul (after Israel's famous first king), now he is willing to be known as the little or small one, who preached Christ, the truly great One. Additionally, it is interesting to consider how King Saul in the Old Testament started out well (popular and well-liked by the people etc., see 1 Sam. 9-11), but ended badly (committed suicide by falling on his own sword to avoid being captured in battle, see 1 Sam. 31). However, Saul in the New Testament started out badly (breathing murderous threats against the disciples of

¹ Leon Morris makes this same point. Morris, p. 36.

the Lord, see Acts 9), but ended well (becoming a servant of Christ and His church).² All of this happened because of Jesus' distinguishing grace toward him.

Obs. 2- That Paul was willing to use his Roman name "Paul" as he started his gospel ministry to the Gentiles. He did this most likely so that his Jewish name would not be a stumbling block to them. Clearly, he was willing to "become all things to all men that he might indeed win some" (1 Cor. 9:19-23).

Obs. 3- That he identifies himself here as the **bondservant of³ Jesus Christ.**⁴ Literally, he is the "slave"⁵ of Jesus Christ.⁶ Paul chose a very strong Greek word to describe his relationship with the Lord. While the word has a wide range of meanings, in summary, it denotes total servitude.⁷ It describes the sole commitment of one person to another, being absolutely ready to do their bidding (Acts 9:6a).⁸ Paul was the slave who entirely *belonged* to Jesus Christ in all aspects of his life. Of course, when he speaks of being a slave of Jesus Christ we should never think of this relationship as one of cruelty or compulsion, but rather one of complete commitment, devotion, and a willing allegiance wrought in his heart by the free grace and love of Jesus.

Obs. 4- That Paul was **called** "an apostle," (or we could take the words to mean "a called apostle,"⁹ the words *to be* are not in the Greek text), highlights the divine manner of his apostleship, showing us that he was directly commissioned by God to this apostolic office. Paul did not seek this position on his own nor force his way into it. Rather, his apostleship was a heavenly, sovereign calling which was "not from men, nor through a man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised Him from the dead" (see Gal. 1:1). The word *called* is used in verses 6 and 7 of this chapter as well, but there the references are not of a call to a unique apostolic office, but first of a sovereign call to Christ for salvation through the gospel (v. 6) and then, second, of a call to be holy, a saint (v.7).

Obs. 5- That the word **apostle** comprises two Greek words, and in this context, denotes being "commissioned," "sent out," or "dispatched" by another. The word carries the idea of being an authorized delegate and appointed messenger of Christ sent to do a specific task.¹⁰ Paul was

2 I am not the first commentator to make this observation.

3 Grk. genitive of possession.

4 I will dwell more on the meaning of the name *Jesus Christ* in verse 3.

5 For a helpful treatment of *slavery* in the ancient world and this entire subject in connection to Paul's use of the word, I recommend reading John MacArthur's book called *Slave: The Hidden Truth about Your Identity in Christ*.

6 Note that at one time, Paul, just like the rest of us, prior to salvation, was a slave to sin (Rom. 6:16-17).

7 No doubt Paul also had other servants of God in mind who were called a similar thing such as Abraham and Joshua (cf. Gen. 26:24; Josh. 24:29).

8 Mounce, 633.

9 Morris, 38.

10 What an amazing thing it is to see the glorious, transforming grace of God in Paul's life. It changed him from Paul the antagonist to Paul the apostle! It changed him from Paul

an “apostle” in the official sense of the word, although he was one “born out of due time” (1 Cor. 15:8). Unlike the other apostles, he did not sit directly under Jesus’ earthly ministry, but was made an apostle after His ascension. He qualified for this unique honor because he saw the risen Lord Jesus Christ and then was directly called by Him (cf. Acts 1:22b; 9:1-16; 1 Cor. 9:1). Incidentally, since no one can meet these qualifications in our day, there can be no present day apostles in this sense.¹¹

Obs. 6- That the word **separated** also comprises two Greek words, and it means to “mark off from others,” or to “set apart for some purpose.” The word in Greek is in the perfect tense, stressing Paul’s present state of separation to his vocational preaching of the gospel from the time he was called to it. Generally speaking, we can say that there were three separations in his life:

1- When he was separated from his mother’s womb for God’s calling in his life (Gal.1:15), much like the calling of Jeremiah in Jeremiah chapter one.

2- When he was separated at conversion to Jesus to preach the gospel to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15), and then

3- When the Holy Spirit said “separate” him to Me for the *official* work of missions (Acts 13:2).¹² Commentator James R. Edwards insightfully comments that,

The Greek word for set apart [separated] is the normal Greek rendering of the Hebrew word for “Pharisee,” which probably means “to separate.”¹³ If Paul is indulging in a word play, he seems to indicate that he now is a different kind of Pharisee from what he had been. Previously he had been a Pharisee separated *from* Gentiles; now he is separated *for* them!¹⁴

Obs. 7- That Paul was separated **to**¹⁵ or for the sake of; **the gospel of God** signifies the specific purpose for his separation as an apostle. Paul was separated “for the service of”¹⁶ proclaiming God’s gospel or “good news.” Further, the words “gospel of God”¹⁷ tell us that God the Father is the author of this history-altering, life-transforming message. He is its architect and divine designer. What an amazing thought! The God from whom we deserve nothing but His wrath (as Paul will soon discuss) has good news for us. He is the God who “so loved the world that He gave

the persecutor to Paul the preacher!

11 Ephesians 2:20 also makes it clear that the apostles were foundational in God’s plan for the church. They understood that their apostolic office would not continue. Thus Paul, for example, throughout his missionary journeys appointed “elders in every church” (Acts 14:23), so that elders would oversee local congregations after the apostles left the scene (cf. Titus 1:5-9).

12 Many commentators have made these three observations.

13 The word also has its roots in the Aramaic language which Paul spoke.

14 Edwards, 28.

15 The preposition with the accusative case can denote purpose.

16 Phillips translation.

17 Grk. genitive of source. These words could also be understood as a possessive genitive, i.e., the gospel which belongs to God. Cf. Rom. 15:16.

His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

Note also that this is the first occurrence of the word *gospel* in this epistle. Interestingly, not only does this book begin on a "gospel note," but as something of a bookend to it, it closes on this same note as well. This shows us clearly that the gospel is the major theme of this letter (cf. Rom. 16:25).¹⁸

Consider three things about the gospel:

First, *its connotation*. The word *gospel*, as stated above means, "good news" or "glad tidings." The Greek word is *euaggelion* which is comprised of two Greek words that mean "good" and "message."

Second, *its concepts*. Its biblical-historical use is found in the Septuagint and it refers to the Old Testament footmen who announced the "good news" of freedom from Babylonian captivity in the sixth century B.C. (cf. Isa. 52:7-10; Rom. 10:15). As these Jewish exiles traveled over the mountains back to Jerusalem, these heralds zealously went before the people, announcing this joyful and exciting news. Additionally, scholars tell us that the term "gospel" was not invented by Paul, but was already used in his day by the Romans regarding Roman imperial propaganda.¹⁹ In the first century, there was what was called the "good news" or "the gospel" of the Caesars. Such "good news" referred to "an announcement of 'glad tidings' regarding a birthday, rise to power, or decree of the emperor that was to herald the fulfillment of hopes for peace and well-being in all the world."²⁰

Having said these two things about the gospel, of course, the gospel that we preach is much grander and more glorious than the aforementioned examples. For one thing, the gospel we preach is God's Emancipation Proclamation; it is a decree of freedom, not merely from physical enemies and oppression as the case was with the Hebrew exiles, but from spiritual enemies and spiritual oppression. And for another thing, the good news we proclaim is not about a mere man (such as Caesar), but rather about the all-powerful God-man, Jesus Christ, who alone is to be worshiped.

Third, *its components*. Essentially, there are four.

i) the gospel is a message about God (v. 1, God, as holy, righteous, and just, who must punish sin, Rom. 6:23a. God who is a God of love, who sent His Son into the world to save sinners, cf. 1 Tim. 1:15).

ii) the gospel is a message about man as a lost, ruined, and rebellious sinner against God, who has fallen short of His glory and thus is under His wrath and just judgment (Rom. 1:18; 3:23).

¹⁸ Paul will repeat several of the major themes found here in verses 1 to 5, in Romans chapter 16 verses 25 to 27.

¹⁹ I first heard of this from Dr. Douglas Moo in his very helpful online course on Romans which could be found here for free: https://www.biblicaltraining.org/romans/douglas_moo.

²⁰ Mounce, 303.

iii) the gospel is a message about Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the sinners' substitute. It is about the Lord who willingly paid the penalty for our sins by taking them upon Himself and being punished for them at the cross. Jesus then was buried and rose again on the third day as the Father's validation of His completed and accepted work on our behalf (cf. Matt. 26:28; Acts 2:32, 33; Rom. 3:21-26; 5:8; Gal. 1:1; 3:10-14; 1 Cor. 15:1-4).²¹

iv) the gospel is about the two demands for all who would receive its benefits namely, expressing repentance toward God for our sins against Him, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ who died as a sacrifice for our sins (Mark 1:15; Rom. 1:16; 5:1; Acts 20:20, 21).²²

Suggested applications from the text for the church:

1- Remember that like Paul, all believers are called to serve Christ with the same bondservant disposition.²³ Do you?

2- Regard your pastors/elders highly for their work's sake because they, like Paul, also derive their authority from Christ. Although they are not apostles, they are called of God to lead Jesus' church.²⁴

3- Resolve to discover if Christ is giving new pastors in your church who exemplify Christ-like, apostolic characteristics. Look for men²⁵ who, like Jesus and Paul, are servants first and foremost; men who preach the gospel, not psychology, philosophy, politics, or their own preferences.

Suggested application from the text for the non-Christian:²⁶

1- Recall that God is not only the author of the gospel, but He is the revealer of it. Therefore, you are accountable to Him to respond to it immediately in true repentance and faith.

Text: Romans 1:2-7

General theme: The Glorious Gospel

Homiletical outline of the verses:

A. The continuity of the gospel: ²which He promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures,

21 Note that the apostle Paul will expound in detail the heart of the gospel in this regard in 3:21-26, a text of Scripture that Martin Luther called, "The chief point, and the very central place of the epistle, and of the whole Bible."

22 For some helpful material on the gospel, I strongly recommend reading the following books: *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God* by J. I. Packer, *Today's Evangelism: Its message and methods* by Ernest C. Reisinger, *The Gospel Call & True Conversion* by Paul Washer, and *What is the Gospel* by Greg Gilbert.

23 Cf. Rom. 6:22; 1 Cor. 7:22; Col. 4:12.

24 Cf. 1 Thess. 5:12, 13.

25 Cf. 1 Tim. 3:1, 2.

26 The reader should note that in this section of the commentary I apply the saving truths of the texts to the non-Christian. I do this because I believe that in all of our preaching, we are to address the lost, obeying Paul's admonition to "do the work of an evangelist," fulfilling our ministries (2 Tim. 4:5).

B. The content of the gospel: ³ concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, ⁴ and declared *to be* the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.

C. The commission of the gospel: ⁵ Through Him we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations for His name, ⁶ among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ; ⁷ To all who are in Rome, beloved of God, called *to be* saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Exegetical & Practical Insights:

Having mentioned the gospel in the previous verse:

Obs. 1- (v. 2) That although the gospel is good news, it is not new news! The gospel of Christ is not a theological novelty or some “Johnny-come-lately story.”²⁷ It is not an afterthought in the mind of God, as though it were some Plan B. Rather, it was that **which God promised before**²⁸ or previously, or in advance, having pre-announced it; **through** or by means of; **His prophets** that is, His Old Testament spokesmen; **in** or by; **the Holy** or set apart from that which is common or distinct from other books; **Scriptures** or writings.²⁹ In other words, the gospel has always been a part of the true religion of God and has always been known and believed by the true people of God (see Gal. 3:8). The gospel is not a break with the past, rather it is the continuation and consummation of it. From the book of Genesis with its first gospel promise (the *protoevangelium*; see Gen. 3:15) and all the way through Scripture, (Gen. 3:15; Deut. 18:15; Ps. 16:12; Ps. 22:1, 16; Isa. 6:14; 53, Jer. 23:6; Dan. 9:26 etc.), we see that the Bible speaks about the *doing, dying, and rising* of Jesus Christ our Lord on our behalf (cf. Luke. 24:25, 26; 44; John 5:46; Acts 10:43; 1 Cor. 15:1-4). Thus, John Calvin was right when he said, “Christ came not on the earth unexpectedly, nor did he introduce a doctrine of a new kind and not heard of before, inasmuch as he, and his gospel too, had been promised and expected from the beginning of the world.”³⁰ Further, note that Paul’s words here in verse two could be somewhat polemical. It could be that he was defending himself against the Judaizers who often thought that he preached against Moses and the law of God.³¹ These men taught that Paul proclaimed some innovative message when he preached the gospel, some new fad that was unheard of in the Jewish Scriptures. Clearly, this was not the case, for the gospel of Christ is neither new nor anti-Jewish, and it is absolutely found in the Old Testament Bible.

Obs. 2- (v. 3) That the central subject of the gospel is Christ. He is the featured Person of the gospel in the Godhead. Even though it is God the Father who planned our salvation from eternity past (Eph. 1:4), and in

27 Merida, p. 10.

28 Grk. aorist, middle, verb.

29 Cf. Rom. 15:4.

30 Calvin, p. 43.

31 MacArthur mentions this point on page 12 of his commentary on Romans.

time, God the Holy Spirit regenerates His elect people according to the divine plan of salvation (Titus 3:5), the gospel, the good news message of the Bible, is centered in or **concerning** the preposition meaning “about” or “with reference to” Jesus Christ. In this sense then, we could say that the gospel is not a *what*, but a *who*. The gospel at its core is the good news concerning Jesus’ person and work (cf. 1 Cor. 15:1-4). Jesus is the chief point and critical center of the message. As Calvin says, “This is a principal passage in which we are taught that the whole gospel is bound up in Christ, so that if anybody moves a single foot away from Christ they withdraw themselves from the gospel.”³²

Obs. 3- That Christ is God’s **Son**. He is His unique Son, the eternal Son (not a created, redeemed and adopted son as believers are, cf. Rom. 8:14, 15), His Son in the sense of equality with the Father (cf. John 10:30). Christ is the second person of the Blessed Trinity. He is the Son of God. He is God the Son. He is the Supreme Being (John 1:1; Rev. 1:8).

Obs. 4- That His *distinctive name* **Jesus** means “God saves” (the word *Jesus* being the Greek equivalent to the Hebrew term, *Yeshua* or in English, Joshua) which means “the Lord is salvation” (cf. Matt. 1:21). This name is used most often in Scripture with reference to the personal, human, Hebrew name of our Lord. His *distinguished title*, **Christ**, is the equivalent Greek term for the Hebrew word *Messiah* found in the Old Testament. It affirms that Jesus is God’s promised anointed and appointed One sent from Him to be His great Messianic King, Mediator, Ruler and mighty Deliverer who would shepherd His people (cf. Matt. 2:4; 16:16).³³ His *divine designation*, **Lord**, means that He is the sovereign master over all things who rules and reigns supreme.³⁴ It means that all authority in heaven and on earth are in His hands. Thus, “all things are subject to him, and we are bound to serve him”³⁵ (cf. Matt. 28:18). This designation also signifies Jesus’ divine nature and it translates the Old Testament word for Lord *Jehovah* multiple times in the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures).

Obs. 5- That Christ became a man. He was **born of the seed of David** as foretold in 2 Sam. 7:11-14. He is from King David’s posterity, or his

32 *Reformation Commentary on Scripture, Romans*, p. 21.

33 The Old Testament has much to say about Jesus the Messiah. There are many predictions concerning Him. It tells us for example that He would be the promised Seed of the woman who would crush the head of the serpent (Gen. 3:15). It tells us that He would be born of a virgin and be the incarnate Son of God (Isa. 7:14). It tells us that He would be born in Bethlehem (Mic. 5:2). It tells us that He would be despised by the Jews (Isa. 53:2-3). It tells us He would die a sacrificial death in the place of the guilty, being pierced through on account of their sins (Ps. 22: 1, 16; Isa. 53:5; Dan. 9:26). It tells us that He would not be left in the grave, that is, He would be raised from the dead (Ps. 16:10). It tells us that He would ascend to heaven (Ps. 68:18), to name a few things.

34 While in Rome, the popular saying was “Caesar is Lord!” Christians would reply back by saying “Christ is Lord!” The point is, they realized that in the ultimate sense, Jesus Christ was the supreme Lord over all things.

35 *The Commentary of Dr. Zacharias Ursinus on the Heidelberg Catechism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1956), 202.

family line. He is from his lineage as the promised Messiah had to be (cf. Acts 13:23). This was so both *legally* through Joseph, his appointed father (see Matt. 1), and *biologically* through Mary as his human mother (see Luke 3).³⁶

Obs. 6- Jesus Christ, the Son of God, actually became man—a real man, 100% man. He came **according to the flesh**³⁷ (not sinful flesh, for He had no sin).³⁸ He came into the world with a true human soul and body. Jesus, who was truly and fully God, through the incarnation, became truly and fully man, being born of a woman (Gal. 4:4). Remaining what He had always been (namely, God), He became something that he had never been (namely, man). He is the God-man; one person, with two natures. He is God “manifested in the flesh” (1 Tim. 3:16), real flesh. He did not only “appear” or “seem” to be human as the heretical group known as the Docetists falsely taught. But again, real man, with flesh, blood, and bones (cf. Luke 24:39). All of this was so that through His sacrificial work on the cross in our place, we might be delivered from the penalty of our sins (1 Cor. 15:3). This is what Jesus did at Calvary for sinners. This is the work He willingly undertook and accomplished in our stead as our sinless representative and surety.

Obs. 7- (v. 4) That in a unique way, Jesus’ resurrection from the dead (v. 4b) **declared** or “distinguished,” and “demonstrated” Him; **to be the Son of God with power** or with sovereign strength. The resurrection was the pivotal point which marked the end of His humiliation on the earth and initiated the beginning of His exaltation into glory; **according to the Spirit of holiness**, there has been much scholarly discussion concerning the language of “the Spirit of holiness” and what it means (whether Jesus’ own inner spirit or disposition of holiness, versus the Holy Spirit etc.); however, the words in this context seem to refer to the Holy Spirit.³⁹

This is made clear especially when we compare this verse, which goes on to speak about Jesus’ resurrection from the dead, with Rom. 8:11 and other places where there are obvious links between the Holy Spirit and Jesus’ resurrection. Luther’s comment on this phrase is noteworthy. He says that: The apostle uses the expression “Spirit of holiness” in place of the “Holy Spirit,” but that is of no significance, for He is the same Spirit who, according to His divine work, is called either “Holy Spirit” or “Spirit of holiness;” **by** or **out of; the resurrection from the dead.**⁴⁰ This language does not, of course, imply that at His resurrection, Jesus became the Son of God, for He was already God’s Son (1:3). Rather, it means that uniquely, His resurrection from the grave was the clear

³⁶ Do not miss the point here in connection to the last phrase of Jesus as God’s Son, that Paul is stressing both the *deity* and the *humanity* of Christ.

³⁷ Cf. 9:5.

³⁸ John 8:46; 2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:15; 1 Pet. 2:22; 1 John 3:5.

³⁹ Harvey says, “Since ‘spirit of holiness’ is a literal translation of the Hebrew *ruach qodesh* (Ps. 51:16; Isa. 63:10-11), that phrase is best understood as a reference to the Holy Spirit.” Harvey, 67.

⁴⁰ Paul also mentions Jesus’ resurrection in 4:25 and 10:9.

line of demarcation which separated Him from the rest of humanity, proving beyond any doubt His exclusive Sonship, and then afterwards, His entrance into His mediatorial reign as the exalted Lord of glory and David's great king (v.3, cf. Ps. 2:6-8; 110:1; Acts 2:29, 30; 1 Cor. 15:20-25).

Obs. 8- (v. 5) That the opening words **through Him** refer to Jesus as "the agent in bestowing grace and appointing unto apostleship;"⁴¹ **we have received**,⁴² or laid hold of, once for all time; **grace**, "received" not *earned* grace.⁴³ Grace is never meritorious. It is not what God gives us for keeping the Ten Commandments, or for being baptized, or for joining a particular church. Instead, grace is that which is freely given to sinners out of God's kind, benevolent heart.

This is the first time of many times that the word "grace" appears in this epistle.⁴⁴ But what exactly is grace? Grace, or as Paul speaks about it in this context, saving grace,⁴⁵ is a virtue or trait in God that speaks about His unmerited, unearned, and uncaused favor and goodwill toward us in Christ, which continues all of our days. For Paul, "the word grace at times seems to function as shorthand for all that God has done for His people in Christ."⁴⁶ Grace is getting what we do not deserve from God, namely, His pardon, peace, joy, and deliverance from His wrath for our sins against Him. It is about we who warranted nothing from our Maker but His judgment, instead getting everything that is good from Him for nothing. All of this is ours "through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 3:24).

Obs. 9- That Paul's **apostleship** which he and the other apostles received through "Him" (again, through the agency of Jesus) is described here regarding three definitive things.

First, he tells us the *purpose* of his apostleship when he speaks of it being **for** or with a view to; **obedience** literally, a hearing under or being submissive; **to the faith**, that is, the objective faith of the gospel.⁴⁷ This speaks primarily about compliance to that message upon initially hearing it, and responding to its demands of repentance and faith (cf. Acts 20:21). Further, the language of "obedience to the faith" connotes saved people, by the power and the enablement of the Holy

41 McBeth, 29.

42 Grk. aorist, active, verb.

43 Cf. Rom. 15:15, 16, where Paul says that "grace" was also given to him in order that he might be a "minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God." See also Rom. 12:3.

44 Cf. See 1:7; 3:24; 4:4, 16; 5:2, 15, 17, 20, 21; 6:1, 14, 15; 11:5, 6; 12:3, 6; 15:15; 16:20, 24.

45 I agree with John Murray when he says, "Grace and apostleship could mean the grace of apostleship. It is more likely, however, that 'grace' is here the more general unmerited favor of God. The apostle was never forgetful of the grace and mercy by which he had been saved and called into the fellowship of Christ (cf. 1 Cor. 15:10; Gal. 1:15; 1 Tim. 1:13-16; 2 Tim. 1:9; Tit. 3:5-7)." Murray, p. 13. This view seems to go better with the general flow of the passage.

46 Matthew Harmon, *Philippians, A Mentor Commentary*, p. 75.

47 Paul ends this glorious epistle on the same note of obedience to the faith as something of a bookend to this entire letter (cf. 16:26).

Spirit, expressing evangelical compliance to the objective faith of the Christian religion as expressed in God's Word.⁴⁸

Second, Paul speaks here of the *scope* of his apostleship when he says that it is **among**, the preposition denoting the sphere of his apostolic labors; **all the nations**, that is, the Gentile nations, not just the Jews (cf. Matt. 28:19). Third, he speaks about the *goal* of his apostleship when he says that it is **for** or on behalf of; **His name**, that is Jesus' name, not his own.⁴⁹

Obs. 10- (v. 6) That Paul writes that these believers at Rome were **among whom you also are**, that is, among all the Gentile nations spoken of in the previous verse. Simply stated, although they were not "called" to be apostles as Paul was (see v. 1), they were, nonetheless, **the called of Jesus Christ**⁵⁰ i.e., those who personally belonged to Him.

Obs. 11- (v. 7) That in Paul addressing these Christians broadly as **all who are in Rome** may mean that there was not a single church in Rome, but multiple local churches in that city (cf. Rom. 16:5, 14, 15). McDonald suggests, "There were several gatherings of believers in the city and this salutation embraces them all."⁵¹ What an amazing thought it is to consider that in the midst of this extremely pagan city, God had a people! Yes, God has chosen ones in the darkest and distant parts of the earth. He has them all throughout the world, in all kinds of obscure and spiritually dim places, since He shows no partiality among humanity (cf. Acts 10:34, 35; 18:9, 10, Rev. 5:9). **Beloved of God** emphasizes that believers are dearly loved, valued and treasured by God. Note that every single believer, regardless of who they are or where they are from, is an object of God's divine love. The church, composed of believing Jews and Gentiles, is individually and collectively cherished by the Lord, being His "own special people."⁵² The church is the apple of God's eye. It is precious to Him, being in the "bosom of His affection," as the theologian John Murray says.⁵³

Obs. 12- That these Christians, just like all true believers in all ages, were **called to be saints** (or saints by Divine calling; the words *to be* as with verse one, are not in the Greek text). Their salvation, just like everyone's salvation — Paul's included — began not with themselves, but with God, for it is God who always starts the call to salvation (1 Cor. 1:9, 30). He issues the divine summons to those whom He chooses for salvation, for they are "called according to His purpose" (Rom. 8:28).

48 In the apostle's mind there is a true connection between faith and obedience to the things of God. Simply stated, Paul was no antinomian and he definitely held to the Lordship of Christ. He preached that a life of faith which alone justifies us before God, is never alone without a life of corresponding obedience to the things of God (cf. John 14:15; James 2:14-26; 1 John 2:4).

49 Note that all ministry, whatever it is, is to have this main view in focus in view.

50 Grk. genitive of possession. See the following verse for an exposition of the word "called."

51 McDonald, 1676.

52 Cf. Deut. 33:3, with 1 Pet. 2:9-10.

53 Murray, p. 15.

Their calling to Christ is rooted in their predestination by the decree of God, which calling always brings about their justification, which always brings about their sanctification, and which always ends in their glorification. This calling takes place in time, as they are *effectually* and *savingly* called to God through the gospel (cf. Rom. 8:30; 11:29; 1 Thess. 1:4, 5; 2 Tim. 1:9).⁵⁴

Further, that they were called “saints” meant that because of their relationship with God through Christ, they were now a consecrated people, sanctified in Christ Jesus (cf. 1 Cor. 1:2). By virtue of the new birth, they were “separate ones,” whose lives were now to be “set apart” unto God from the world and sin. They were those who, because they were radically changed *within*, were now to live distinctly Christian lives *without* in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation (cf. Phil. 2:15). They were those who, by the help and grace of God, by the enablement of the Holy Spirit, were to live morally pure and different from others around them. They were called to be holy, even as God Himself is holy (cf. Lev. 11:44; 1 Pet. 1:16).

Additionally, the fact that Paul says that they were “called saints” shows that this is not something that would happen to them in the *future* when they died, but was, in fact, a *present* reality for them. According to Scripture, a saint is not some individual who at last enters some “special honorary status” after death. No, a saint is a saved, living, breathing believer who is in this world, but is not of the world. He is a Christian! She is a Christian! This is what these Romans were. This is what you are, believer.

However, remember that this was not what the Romans were before conversion.⁵⁵ Paul says they were *called* saints, *not born* saints. The point is, they were once just as ungodly as others living in Rome at that time (Rom. 6:17, 18). They also were once “dead in trespasses and sins,” being “alienated from the life of God,” just as we all were “because of the ignorance that [was] in them, because of the blindness of their heart” (Eph. 2:1; 4:18). Now, however, by the great transforming power of the gospel, they were made new people in Jesus. They had become the salt of the earth. The light of the world (Matt. 5:13, 14).

Obs. 13- That the benediction, **grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ**, is one which appears in all of Paul’s epistles. True spiritual “grace” or goodwill and unmerited favor, is that which refers to all the spiritual blessings which God in Christ confers upon His people (as mentioned above in the comments on v. 5); and “peace” which is not the absence of turmoil, but inner serenity in the midst of it, is that which comes exclusively “from” or out of as its source; “God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” Augustine warmly writes:

⁵⁴ This divine summons from God is not merely the general external call that all people hear when the gospel is preached, but rather that which is internal, and effectual and always produces salvation (cf. Matt. 10:27).

⁵⁵ See the second half of Romans 1, and Romans 2.

Grace then is from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, by which our sins, which had turned us from God, are forgiven; and from them also is this peace, whereby we are reconciled to God. Since through grace hostilities dissolve once sins are remitted, now we may cling in peace to him from whom our sins alone had torn us.... But when these sins have been forgiven through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, we shall have peace with no separation between us and God.⁵⁶

Moreover, note that based on these words, that grace and peace come “from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ,” it is clear that Jesus must, in fact, be God.⁵⁷ As the Bible commentator Robert Haldane rightly said, “Here again we see an incontrovertible proof of the deity of Jesus Christ; for, if He were not God, He could not without impiety be thus joined with, or invoked along with, the Father to impart blessings, of which God alone is the author.”⁵⁸

Suggested applications from the text for the church:

1- Love the gospel; think about all that God has done for you through it.

2- Live in the gospel; regularly preach it to yourself, remembering how it tells you about your election, justification, sanctification, and glorification, etc.

3- Live out the gospel; adorn it as a child of God. Commend it to the world through how you live. Do not discredit it.

4- Let loose the gospel; share it as far and wide as you possibly can to the lost.

Suggested application from the text for the non-Christian:

1- Believe the gospel. This is God’s message for you.

Text: Romans 1:8-15

General theme: Paul’s Pastoral Heart

Homiletical outline of the verses:

A. His praise:⁸ First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.

B. His prayers:⁹ For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of His Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers, ¹⁰ making request if, by some means, now at last I may find a way in the will of God to come to you.

C. His plans:¹¹ For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, so that you may be established— ¹² that is, that I may be encouraged together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me. ¹³ Now I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that I often planned to

⁵⁶ *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, Romans* p. 14.

⁵⁷ Paul already hinted at this matter in 1:3a.

⁵⁸ Haldane, p. 36.