

Jonathan Bayes: 14 February 2021

Romans 1:1-7 - Christ is central to everything

This passage from Romans mentions Christ, either directly or indirectly, six times. These references, which we will look at one by one, indicate how central Christ is to everything the apostle does. Paul demonstrates how we should put Christ at the centre of our thinking, affections, goals and decisions.

Bondservants (v1)

Paul has not yet visited the Roman church and rather than first introducing himself as an apostle, chooses to introduce himself as a fellow-servant of Christ. The word 'bondservant' has the same meaning as 'slave' in the Old Testament. Paul is like the slave of Exodus 21:5 who loves his master and turns down the opportunity to go free. He is permanently devoted to Christ. Is this true of us?

The gospel is all about Jesus Christ (vv1-3)

Paul speaks of the gospel 'concerning His Son Jesus Christ'. We might think that the Gospel is about having our sins forgiven, or the gift of eternal life: while these things are true, we must not sideline Christ by majoring on the Gospel's benefits for us. The Gospel is about a relationship with a Person. Paul's ambition was that 'I might know Him..' (Phil. 3:10), experiencing His love and talking with Him. This is a big challenge for us: do we know Christ personally, not just the truths about Him or the benefits He brings?

The Lord Jesus is the source of the grace we need for our service (v5)

Paul received grace to fulfil his calling as an apostle. Everything we do - our work, family responsibilities, etc - should be seen as service for Jesus, and we need grace to fulfil it. This grace is a free gift of undeserved kindness from Jesus Christ. We should see our service as a privilege; Christ does not need us but graciously gives us a place in His plans.

The goal of the Gospel is the reputation of Christ: 'for His name' (v5)

We want souls to be saved but Paul puts the honour of Christ first. Our first priority should be that Jesus is glorified.

Called by the Lord Jesus Christ (v6)

Sometimes when we identify ourselves as Christians, we are thinking about our response to the Gospel. Paul describes the Roman believers as 'the called of Jesus Christ'. This

places the emphasis on His calling rather than our response. We are reminded of our helplessness and his amazing kindness in taking the initiative to save us.

We are 'called to be saints' (v7). Every believer is a saint, set apart for God. We're not saints because we are special but because He has called us.

Jesus, the source of grace and peace (v7)

The Lord's grace leads to peace. Grace gives us the power to be

- kept by the power of God
- upheld by His grace
- loved by Him.

'There is no peace for the wicked' (Isaiah 48:22). As long as we are rebelling against God, we will have no peace. But for Christians, 'having been justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ' (Romans 5:1). We have peace as we know we are in safe hands, in the loving care of a wonderful Saviour.