

Romans 1:1-17

Romans 1

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¹Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called *to be* an apostle, separated to the gospel of God

Paul begins his letter with a very brief introduction of himself. He doesn't say much, but what he says tells a lot.

First Paul describes himself as a bondservant. The word in Greek is *Doulos* (doo' loss). It likely reflects the idea in Ex 21:5-6 of the servant who wants to remain as a servant to his master for life. So he voluntarily accepts a permanent mark- a pierced ear, to signify that commitment. Paul saw himself as this kind of servant. He was wholeheartedly committed as a servant to his master. He no longer was free to live like those who were not the servants of His Lord. His life was no longer his own. He was to be absorbed with His Master's desires and His Master's household. And he regarded it as a personal advantage to do so. He wanted to be in the servant-hood of Jesus Christ. There was no better use for his life than this.

How about us? Did we regard our lives this last week as the Lord's to spend as he chose? Did we see our only

significance in life as being in our service to the Lord? Did we view the tasks in front of us as ones that the Lord had given for us to do? Or were we even busy acting in faith toward Christ this week? Scripture tells us that we are not our own. We were bought with a price. What must we change in order to live like a true slave of Christ's? How would our lives change if we viewed our lives as slaves of Christ?

Second Paul describes himself as an apostle. The word apostle means a person who is sent. It referred to someone with an official capacity like an ambassador. Cargo ships were sometimes referred to as apostolic because they were sent to specific places for specific reasons.

The word apostle is sometimes used in a generic sense. (Rom 16:7 and Acts 14:14) It can be applied to all believers because we are all sent with a specific function. Yet most often in scripture it refers to the 13 Disciples, the twelve who Christ chose less Judas plus Matthais and Paul. Christ personally chose these men, (some might argue about Matthais) and commissioned them to proclaim the gospel and lead the church.

Paul mentions here that he was CALLED to be an apostle. Paul didn't decide to become one. He didn't fill out an application. Christ called Paul for this position. He singled him out. And as such, he had a responsibility toward God to carry out the work that Christ had called him to.

And what was this work? Paul was **Separated** to the Gospel of God. We see information about this in Acts. God had just knocked Paul off his horse and here Christ was sending Ananias to go see Paul. Acts 9:13-16 Then Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he has done to Your saints in Jerusalem. 14And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name."

15 But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the

children of Israel. 16For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake."

In Acts 13:2 As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, "Now **separate** to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." 3Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away.

Gal 1:15,16 But when it pleased God, who **separated** me from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, 16to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles,

Paul was separated for a specific purpose. He was chosen to bear Christ's name to many places, specifically gentile, and in many situations. Separated- Aphorizo (a for id' zo) This is the same word used in Romans, Acts and Galatians

Thayer Definition:

to mark off from others by boundaries, to limit, to separate in a good sense: to appoint, set apart for some purpose Paul was set apart, singled out from the herd, for this purpose. He was to carry the Gospel of God all over the world. The word Gospel Euaggelion (you ang el' ee on) was used commonly referring to good tidings regarding the emperor. The emporor demanded Godlike status among his population. So if the emperor had a child, a messenger would be sent to proclaim this good news to the populace. He would proclaim the **gospel** of the emperor. Paul was sent to spread the good news, but it wasn't the gospel of Nero. It was the gospel of God. Paul was on assignment by God to proclaim the good news of God. And this is now new good news. It isn't the latest "bright idea" optimistic thought. This is a good news with history. It is not the good news of the New Testament only. It was the good news that God had planned from the beginning of time. Paul, in a few sentences, moves on the show how legitimate this gospel is.

²which He promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures,

Paul first starts by pointing out that this salvation that Paul is proclaiming was first proclaimed by the prophets in the Old Testament. The prophets refers to most anyone who had a hand in writing scripture. Moses is even referred to as a prophet.

The Jews of this time had already opted for accepting tradition as being more important than scripture. They had a tendency to grant more authority to their commentaries and systems of thought than they did to the original documents. The devil will always work hard to remove people from knowing and studying God's word. And he will use whatever works. If he can get us to shift our focus from reading the Bible to relying upon a commentary for our guidance, he is accomplishing his goals. It won't seem like a bad thing, but it is. Had the Jews in that day focused solely on searching scripture for answers, they would have received Christ as the Messiah. His coming was predicted with over 300 references in the OT. The commentaries didn't know what to think about them, so those who only relied on the commentaries were set up to miss Christ when He came. We too are in the same type of danger when we allow someone else to do the study and interpretation for us. We've got to stick close to scripture.

³concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh,

This is the Savior who was prophesied. Paul leaves no options for ambiguity. He stakes his claim on the person of Jesus Christ. He names his name. He is not a concept. He is a time and space person. And the prophecies that were made were concerning **this person**. All of the promises regarding a Messiah and Savior were made about Jesus Christ. And He is God's Son. The Messiah was not going to be someone that was **only** human. The Messiah was going

to be fully human and fully God. That is the part that most Jewish scholars missed.

So we see that Jesus is God's Son. He is of divine origin.

We see also that he is of a human bloodline of the descent of David. The Messiah had to be of the seed of David. The prophecies about Christ included a bloodline that Christ had to be born of. So most of the Jewish ideas of the Messiah were that he was simply a human man. Paul includes here-according to the flesh. It as if to say, if you were to describe the humanity of Christ, he was born from David's bloodline. But that is not all as the next verse goes on to show.

⁴*and declared to be* the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.

Declared- Horizo (hor id' zo)

Thayer Definition:

1) to define

1a) to mark out the boundaries or limits (of any place or thing)

1b1) that which has been determined, acc. to appointment, decree

1b2) to ordain, determine, appoint

This word is figuratively used as declaring the truth of the matter of the distinctiveness of Christ, according to the Greek references I used. In this instance Christ is declared or decreed to be the Son of God by power shown by the power of Christ raising from the dead. In a sense the **Resurrection** says "This is the Christ, the Messiah, the Savior, better than anything else could say it. Anyone could claim to be the Messiah. But who could raise from the dead?

Notice that Christ's relationship to the Father was not simply declared, but it was declared, decreed, with power. You have evidence of Christ's **relationship to God** by the **power** that accompanied his life. Does that sound familiar?

We find in scripture that the we will also see evidence of a believer's relationship to God because they will be recipients of some of that same power.

I Cor 4:19,20 19 But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord wills, and I will know, not the word of those who are puffed up, but the power. 20 For the kingdom of God is not in word but in power.

Ephesians 1: 15 Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, 16 do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers: 17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, 18 the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, 19 and what is the exceeding greatness of **His power toward us who believe**, according to the working of His mighty power 20 which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, 21 far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come.

We see here that the same power that we are studying in Romans is also toward us who believe. It is the same type of power from the same source.

Col 1: 9 For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; 10 that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; 11 **strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy**; 12 giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be

partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light. 13 He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, 14 in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.

We see again that this same resurrection power is available for believers to be strengthened. And it comes by understanding and walking by faith in the understanding that it is there for us to appropriate for Godly living. We CAN walk in the power of Christ to glorify Christ.

II Tim 1: 6 Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. 7 For God has not given us a spirit of fear, **but of power** and of love and of a sound mind.

We see here that God doesn't give us a spirit of fear. We may have it, but it is not from walking in the Spirit. What God gives is a spirit of power and love.

II Tim 3: 2 For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, 3 unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, 4 traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, 5 having a form of godliness but **denying its power**. And from such people turn away!

We see here that a powerless person is a godless person. God grants us to live powerful godly lives, not just powerless forms of show.

II Peter 1: 3 as **His divine power** has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the

knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, 4by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

God's power, the same power that raised Christ from the dead, has given us everything that we need to live godly lives, by knowing Christ who called us. We must faithfully believe and apply what we know of Christ.

Verse 4 says that Christ was declared with power according to the Spirit of holiness. The phrase, "Spirit of Holiness" is only used here. The fact that the translators capitalized the S in spirit shows that they believed it was speaking of the Holy Spirit.

So we can see that as Christ was proven to be God by the power of the resurrection, believers are given that same type of power from the same source for godly living. There is no such thing as a powerless Christianity. Do we believe that? Do we live like it? Do we want to appropriate that power in our lives for godly living? Would those who know us best testify to God's power in our lives? Have they seen changes in our lives that could only be explained by the power of God. That power is available to us. And we must trust Christ for that power to change.

⁵Through Him we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations for His name,
⁶among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ;

It is through Christ that Paul and the other apostles have received grace and apostleship. This is consistent with all the New Testament scriptures.

The word here for grace is Charis (Khar' ees)
One of the uses of this word is

3b) the token or proof of grace, benefit

3b1) a gift of grace

3b2) benefit, bounty

This word Charis is used in the context of spiritual gifts in I Corinthians. Since in this context in Romans Paul is speaking about himself and the other apostles, it would appear that the grace he is speaking about is the specific grace regarding their position, rather than the greater grace that is available to all believers. Otherwise it would be odd that he would say that he and the other apostles received saving grace and apostleship. In the context it appears that he is speaking about things that are specifically true about the apostles. It looks like Paul is saying that the apostles received a specific grace fitting their position as apostles. And it is truly a grace that is used to benefit the whole church.

He appears to use the word grace in this specific fashion several times in Romans.

Romans 12:3 For I say, through the **grace** given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith. 4For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, 5so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. 6Having then gifts differing according **to the grace** that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; 7or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; 8he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

Romans 15: 15Nevertheless, brethren, I have written more boldly to you on some points, as reminding you, because of the grace given to me by God,

This is open to other opinions so see what you think.

And what was the grace and apostleship for? Obedience to the faith among all nations for Christ's name.

There are many out there that would teach that the gospel is for little but putting a person into a saved category rather than a lost category. But the gospel and its accompanying grace and Holy Spirit, does not need to accomplish anything else to prove the truth of its existence. Scripture knows none of this kind of teaching. Just as we already saw that power accompanies the resurrection and power accompanies salvation, we also see that grace is given for obedience in its receivers, no matter where they are on the globe or what nationality they are.

Paul starts Romans with a reference to the gospel and the obedience of believers. As he ends the book he comes back to this theme two times in the last two chapters. Mike calls this a sandwich of obedience.

Romans 15 :15 Nevertheless, brethren, **I have written** more boldly to you on some points, as reminding you, **because of the grace given to me** by God, 16 **that I might be a minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles**, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering of the Gentiles might be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. 17 Therefore I have reason to glory in Christ Jesus in the things which pertain to God. 18 **For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ has not accomplished through me**, in word and deed, **to make the Gentiles obedient**—19in mighty signs and wonders, **by the power of the Spirit of God**, so that from Jerusalem and round about to Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.

And to close out the book Paul mentions it again.

Romans 16: ²⁵ Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began ²⁶ but now made manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures made known to all nations, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, **for obedience to the faith**—²⁷ to God, alone wise, be glory through Jesus Christ forever.

Paul is the patron saint of those who preach an easy believe-ism. But Paul knew nothing of their theology or methods. Paul was not content that God had accomplished anything through him until He saw the Spirit's power displayed in an obedient changed life. This is just one example of hundreds in the New Testament. Faith without works is dead. And obedience is a necessity to true faith. We will see as Paul goes on in this book of systematic theology that he never expects perfect sinless obedience. But he always expects imperfect, growing obedience.

We should notice too to what end Paul is always working. "obedience to the faith among all nations **for His name**,

When Paul prayed, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven" he meant it. His agenda was not for the kingdom of Paul. It was not for the Pharisee party or the evangelist party or the apostleship party. His work was for the kingdom of Christ. He didn't do it perfectly, but he never lost sight of why he was doing what he was doing. And he kept his actions, for the most part, submitted to the Lord of that kingdom. What a great example he was for us. What is our work dedicated to? Can we ask a series of why questions until we get back to obedience to Christ? Why do we work? Why do we read? Why do we play? Why do we say what we say? Why do we schedule what we schedule?

Is it all in faithful obedience to the person of Christ for the name of Christ? Paul lived and preached and ministered in Christ's name and for Christ's name. How about us?

⁶among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ"

Paul here includes those in Rome who were included in his ministry of obedience to the faith. Paul initially describes himself as a called person by Jesus Christ. Now he includes the Christians at Rome as the called of Jesus Christ.

In conclusion, the first six verses introduce Paul as the Servant of God, Apostle of Christ and separated for the purpose of proclaiming the gospel. This gospel was prophesied in the old testament, and predicted the person of Jesus Christ, both man and God, who would be born in the bloodline of David. His resurrection pronounced with power that he was the Savior.

This week some of our reflections should include-

Do I view MY life as being a bondservant to Christ?

Does my life display the same type of power as raised Christ from the dead?

And the book of Romans starts and ends with obedience as a necessary quality of salvation. Are we walking as obedient children? If not, what must we do to make the necessary changes?

Close in prayer

Study to verse 15 next time.