

Romans 1:1-7

Understanding the Gospel of God, pt. 3

The book of Romans is the apostle Paul's magnum opus

- Hands down, it is the most comprehensive book of doctrine in the New Testament

Romans is a phenomenal book for many reasons

- There is great scope to the book – it covers many different topics
- There is great depth in the book – the topics are discussed with great insight and detail

We are just getting started with our study of this book

- As a matter of fact, we are still in the opening seven verses

Paul begins the book of Romans with some introductory remarks

- Remarks about himself (1:1)
- Remarks about the Gospel (1:2)
- Remarks about Jesus Christ (1:3-4)
- Remarks about his audience (1:5-7)

We have learned that Paul referred to himself as "**a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God**" (Ro 1:1)

- His authority is from God, not from himself

This Gospel that Paul proclaims was "**promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures**" (Ro 1:2)

- Paul is not preaching a new set of doctrine
- Rather, he is basing his teaching on the foundation of the Old Testament

Last week, we took some time to examine Paul's statements pertaining to Jesus Christ in verses 3 & 4, "**concerning His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh, who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord**" (Ro 1:3-4)

- We saw that Paul emphasized both the humanity and the deity of Jesus Christ

We don't have the luxury of choosing the humanity or the deity of Christ

- If we minimize one of His natures over the other, we have sought to define Jesus Christ in a way that is contrary to the Bible

The deity and humanity of Christ is not an either/or

- It is both/and

Listen to Paul's words in Colossians 2:9, "**For in Him all the fulness of Deity dwells in bodily form**"

- Jesus Christ was 100% God – "**all the fulness of Deity**"
- Jesus Christ was 100% Man – "**in bodily form**"

Jesus Christ lived a perfect, sinless life

- He died as a Substitute for sinners, becoming the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world
- He was buried in a grave
- But on the third day, Jesus arose from the dead, signifying His power over death, hell, and the grave

Paul has never visited the church of Rome

- So in writing to gain their prayer and financial support, it was imperative for Paul to state his doctrinal position on these matters

Let's read Romans 1:1-7

The identity of Jesus Christ is a critical matter

- You can't have your sins forgiven if you have a faulty view of who Jesus Christ is

But it is also important to understand our identity as believers

- If we have wrong thinking about our identity in Christ, it will have consequences in how we think and how we live

In Romans 1:5-7, the apostle Paul wraps up this introductory section with some remarks about his audience, the believers at Rome

IV. The saints of God (1:5-7)

⁵ through whom we have received grace and apostleship

Verses 3-4 have discussed the humanity and deity of Jesus Christ

So when Paul begins verse 5 by stating, “**through whom...**,” we know that the “**whom**” in question is none other than Jesus Christ

- That is clear enough in our English translations

Paul states in verse 5 that through Christ “**we have received grace and apostleship**”

- In other words, Jesus Christ was the source of these gifts

Later in the book of Romans, Paul will state, “**For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen**” (Ro 11:36)

- According to the apostle, all things are “**from Him and through Him and to Him**”

Specifically in verse 5, two items are listed, “**grace and apostleship**”

- There is a question whether these two terms are to be taken together (“apostolic grace”)¹ or separate (“grace and apostleship”)

There are good arguments for both viewpoints

- Ultimately, the issue isn't all that important

What is important is that we rightly understand Paul's thesis

- Whether you take the phrase as being one thought or two, the main point is “**grace**”

From beginning to end, the Christian life is a life of grace

- We receive what we don't deserve
- We don't receive what we deserve

¹ W.H. Griffith-Thomas, *St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans*, 40.

"But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Ro 5:8)

- That, my friend, is God's grace!

Grace begins our life of faith

- Listen to the words of Ephesians 2:8-9, "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast" (Eph 2:8-9, emphasis mine)

What is "the gift of God"?

- Everything, beginning with the initial act of faith and forward!

Paul would confess in 1 Corinthians 15, "But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me." (1 Co 15:10)

- Paul was who he was by the grace of God
- Paul could labor only because of the sustaining power of God's grace

Along with the gift of faith, Paul also cites his apostleship as an act of God's grace

- Paul didn't deserve to be an apostle
- Paul didn't volunteer to be an apostle

Christ personally appointed and selected those who would become His apostles

- It was never a task that they volunteered for

An apostle is an official representative and spokesman for Christ

- His authority was based on Christ's authority

It was because of Christ and through His choosing that Paul had "received grace and apostleship"

- Not only the grace of salvation
- But the grace of service – service as an apostle²

Keep in mind that no other name is mentioned besides Paul in the opening of this letter

- Sometimes he includes Timothy or Silas
- But only Paul's name is listed in this book

So why does Paul write, "we have received..." (emphasis mine)?

- This is a use of the editorial "we"³
- This is the legitimate manner of referring to the speaker ("me") in the plural ("we")

Paul cannot have the Roman church in mind with the use of "we"

- They had not received the gift of apostleship⁴

For Paul, however, his apostleship had a specific aim or purpose

- That is listed in verse 5 by the use of three prepositional phrases
 - o "to bring about the obedience of faith"
 - o "among all the Gentiles,"
 - o "for His name's sake"

² Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 49.

³ Morris, 48.

⁴ Everett F. Harrison, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Romans*, 15.

to bring about *the* obedience of faith

The Divine task for which Paul had been appointed was “to bring about the obedience of faith”

- This was Paul’s mission statement
- It was his life purpose

Genuine, saving faith inevitably results in obedience

- To believe implies obedience

Faith and obedience are shown to be inseparable

- To exercise faith is to be obedient
- To be obedient is to exercise faith⁵

Genuine faith is not merely an intellectual agreement to a set of propositions

- Genuine faith is a surrendering to Jesus Christ
- It is an “active commitment of one’s life”⁶

If we defined faith as merely intellectual agreement, then Satan and his demons would qualify

- Listen to James 2:19, “**You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder**”

They have a correct awareness of who Jesus is

- However, they refused to submit to His Lordship!

There is nothing magical about saying the name “**Lord**”

- In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, “**Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven. Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness’**” (Mt 7:21-23)

Those who enter the kingdom of heaven are those who do the will of God

- That is obedience!

Merely repeating the words “**Lord, Lord**” or doing religious works apart from a relationship with Christ is meaningless

- Actually, it is deceptive and damning

Obedience is not optional for the believer

- “**If you love Me, you will keep My commandments**” (Jn 14:15)
- Our love will be shown by our obedience

In Ephesians 2:2, unbelievers are referred to as “**sons of disobedience**”

- Unbelievers are characterized by a lifestyle of active disobedience to the Word of God

This is a real challenge for those of us who claim to be Christians

- We should not be “**sons of disobedience**”
- Instead, we should be sons of obedience

⁵ William Hendriksen, *NTC, Romans*, 45.

⁶ Robert H. Mounce, *NAC, Romans*, 62.

James 2 tells us that a faith without works is dead

- Genuine faith will display itself with corresponding works

We are not saved by our works

- But we are saved for or unto good works (Eph 2:10)

Works are not the root of our salvation

- They are the fruit of our salvation

This emphasis on an obedient faith is used at the beginning and of the book of Romans⁷

- Look with me at verse 8, "**First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, because your faith is being proclaimed throughout the whole world**" (Ro 1:8, emphasis mine)
- In chapter 16, we read "**For the report of your obedience has reached to all**" (16:19)

Romans 1:8 chronicles the believers' faith

- Romans 16:19 chronicles the believers' obedience
- They are one and the same

They are written to the same believers!

- Both faith and obedience were identified together in the lives of this local church

This emphasis on obedient faith is not just found in the book of Romans

- Consider what our Lord told His disciples in the Great Commission, "**All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age**" (Mt 28:18-20, emphasis mine)

Part of the Great Commission is teaching believers to observe what God has commanded us!⁸

- That is obedience!
- That is genuine faith!

This phrase acts as a double bookend, beginning and ending this great book of Romans

For Paul, this obedience did not end at the time of conversion

- He desired that believers continue to walk in obedience all the days of their lives

Obedience is not a one-time decision

- For the believer, obedience is a lifetime and lifelong commitment⁹

among all the Gentiles.

Paul was formerly an enemy of Christianity

- Saul was a zealous persecutor of the Church
- He was a religious terrorist
- As a Jew, he passionately pursued the Law of God, trying to obtain a righteousness from the Law

⁷ William R. Newell, *Romans: Verse-by-Verse*, 8.

⁸ John MacArthur, Jr., *The MacArthur NT Commentary, Romans 1-8*, 24.

⁹ Douglas J. Moo, *NICNT, Romans*, 52.

But God took this Jew and turned him into an apostle to the Gentiles

- Imagine the dramatic change that God had to bring in his heart to accomplish this!

In Romans 11:13, Paul claims to be “an apostle of Gentiles”

- In writing to young Timothy, Paul writes, "And for this I was appointed a preacher and an apostle (I am telling the truth, I am not lying) as a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth" (1 Ti 2:7)

Immediately after Saul’s conversion, the Lord told Ananias, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel" (Ac 9:15; 22:21)

It should continually amaze us that God extends salvation to Gentiles

- Throughout the Old Testament, God made promises and covenants with the Jews

Yet in the New Testament, God shows His amazing grace to Jews and Gentiles

- Listen to Paul’s words to the Gentiles in Ephesians 2, "remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ" (Eph 2:12-13)

Believing Gentiles and believing Jews are alike in God’s eyes

- Gentile Christians are in no way inferior to Jewish Christians

During my first year of being here at CBC, the church was experiencing some financial difficulties

- The leadership still wanted me to attend the Shepherds’ Conference, an annual pastor’s conference in California

In an effort to cut down on expenses, I knew that the Conference gave away a limited number of scholarships

- I wrote a letter requesting one of these scholarships, citing our church’s financial situation
- And I received a scholarship

When I went to the table to pick up my nametag, they treated me just like everyone else

- I was not given a tag that said, “Scholarship recipient – please treat differently”
- On the contrary, I was treated as if I had paid the full fare

Gentile believers, don’t think that you are somehow inferior to Jewish believers

- God has declared us to be equal in God’s sight
- "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Ga 3:28)

Look with me at Romans 1:14, "I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. Thus, for my part, I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome. For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek" (Ro 1:14-16)

- Paul proclaimed the Gospel to everyone
- Paul was ready to proclaim the Gospel to those in Rome
- Paul was not ashamed of the Gospel, for he knew that the Gospel was “the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek”

This statement on the part of Paul may give us a hint that the church of Rome was predominantly Gentile

- Verse 13 would be further evidence of this as well¹⁰

for His name's sake

Paul's apostleship to bring about the obedience of the faith among all the Gentiles had a specific goal, "for His name's sake"

- It wasn't for the sake of Paul
- It wasn't for the sake of the Gentiles
- It was for the sake of Jesus Christ

In Biblical times, a person's name was synonymous with his character

- Hence, when God changed a person's name, He changed his character¹¹

We can think of several individuals whose names and lives were changed by God

- Abram became Abraham
- Jacob became Israel
- Simon became Peter
- Saul became Paul

Here at the end of verse 5, the focus is not on the name of Paul

- It is the name of Jesus

The apostle lived his life for the glory of God

- This was the highest life
- This was the best life

This same author would write in 1 Corinthians 10, "Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Co 10:31)

- If mundane things like eating and drinking could be done for the glory of God, then certainly Paul's apostolic ministry could be performed for God's glory!

We must stop and ask ourselves, "Am I living for God's glory?"

- I would encourage you to be honest with yourself
- God already knows your heart

It is easy for us to think that we are living for God's glory

- But when we begin to look at our motives, actions, and thoughts, perhaps we see a different picture
- Perhaps we see a focus on exalting ourselves

In a day and age where self is being worshipped, we need to be different

- As those who claim to follow Christ, we need to make a deliberate choice to glorify Jesus Christ

¹⁰ Morris, 51.

¹¹ Morris, 50-51.

Paul's apostleship serves to remind us of some crucial truths¹²

- The Divine purpose, "an obedient faith"
- The Universal scope, "among all the Gentiles"
- The supreme motive, "for His name"

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

Paul wanted the believers at Rome to understand that they fell within his supervision and authority as an apostle of the Gentiles

- Even though he had never visited the church of Rome, they were still under his influence and leadership

These believers at Rome were "the called of Jesus Christ"

- In verse 1, Paul said that he was "called *as* an apostle"
- Here in verse 6, every believer is said to be "the called of Jesus Christ"

Let us not make the mistake of thinking that the "call" of God is merely an invitation

- In the Pauline epistles, the call of God is an effectual call
- In other words, the call of God achieves the purpose of God

This is yet another reminder of the sovereign choice of God in our lives

- We may be tempted to think that we are the ones who are responsible for our salvation
- Yet behind the scenes, God is shown to draw sinners to Himself

John wrote in 1 John 4, "We love, because He first loved us" (1 Jn 4:19)

- Yes, we love God
- But God first loved us!

Paul affirms that the believers at Rome had responded favorably to God's call to salvation

- Paul will speak more about this call throughout the book of Romans (8:28, 30; 9:24)¹³

Born-again Christians are those who have placed themselves under the authority of Jesus Christ

- We have submitted our lives to Him as Lord

⁷ to all who are beloved of God in Rome, called *as* saints:

The apostle Paul further describes the believers in Rome by referring to them as "all who are beloved of God in Rome"

- He is not addressing every person in Rome
- He is addressing every believer in Rome¹⁴

The term "beloved" as used here in verse 7 is a specialized, intensified form of the Greek word *agape*

- *Agape* is the highest Greek word for love

On many occasions in the NT, this term is used of Jesus Christ as God's "beloved Son" (Mt 3:17)

- Most of the time, however, it is used of Christians

¹² Griffith-Thomas, 41.

¹³ Hendriksen, 46.

¹⁴ C.E.B. Cranfield, *ICC, Romans*, 68.

It is true that God does love the entire world, as John 3:16 affirms

- But those of us who have been born again are especially loved by God

Unbelievers are never referred to as “**beloved**”

- This word is used exclusively of God’s children

It is true that I love my neighbor

- And it is true that I love my family
- But the love for my family is on a deeper, more intimate level

In Romans 8, Paul will go on to say that nothing will separate us from the love of God

- We are eternally secure in His love

When you think of “saints,” perhaps you think of the Roman Catholic Church

- I assure you that their process of making someone a saint is radically different from God’s standard

The Catholic Church’s system of making someone a saint is based on human merit, worthiness, and life works¹⁵

- A person cannot become a saint until after his/her death
- Various individuals and groups have to decide whether or not a person is to become a saint

The Bible, however, refers to every born-again believer as a saint

- At the moment of conversion, we are given this status
- We are declared to be saints while we are living, not after we have died

We are not saints because of what we have done

- We are saints because of what Christ has done for us

But you may object, “Kevin, I am certainly no saint!”

- Of course, we all sin
- We will sin after we become Christians

Read Romans 1:7 again, “**to all who are beloved of God in Rome, called *as* saints**”

- He isn’t addressing church leaders
- He isn’t addressing certain believers

In a broad and sweeping statement, the apostle Paul refers to all believers as “**saints**”¹⁶

Believers are not called because they were saints

- They are saints because they were called¹⁷
- *This underscores God’s initiative in our lives*

In the Old Testament, there were certain objects and places that were considered holy

- The holy of holies
- The priests
- The tithe of the land
- The Israelites as a nation

¹⁵ <http://people.howstuffworks.com/question6191.htm>

¹⁶ Alan F. Johnson, *Everyman’s Bible Commentary, Romans*, 30.

¹⁷ Griffith-Thomas, 49.

But in the New Testament, Christians are considered holy

- "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light" (1 Pe 2:9)

A saint is not a person who is sinless

- A saint is a believer whose sin has been blotted out on the basis of Christ's substitutionary atonement
- Consequently, all saints should strive to live for God's glory by living the holiest life that they can, empowered by the Holy Spirit¹⁸

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."

There were different types of greetings in Paul's day¹⁹

- The typical Greek greeting was *chaire*, "Rejoice!"
- The typical Hebrew greeting was *shalom*, "Peace!"

Paul takes both of these terms and merges them into one Christianized greeting, "grace...and peace"

Peace is the result of God's grace²⁰

- Grace is what we receive
- Peace is what we experience

Grace is that undeserved, unmerited favor

- Grace is certainly not what we deserve as sinful human beings
- ***Grace could be a one-word summary of the Gospel***²¹

Peace is the result of God's grace

- Peace is the state of reconciliation between sinful humans and holy God

We are no longer enemies of God

- Instead, we are His family!

Both grace and peace come from the same source, "God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ"

- God the Father and Jesus Christ are oftentimes paired together, thereby showing the deity of both individuals

Here at CBC, we don't have any kind of a greeting like this

- Most of the time, we greet one another with, "Good morning" or "How are you?"
- In no way are these Christian greetings

But Paul would characteristically open his epistles with this greeting, "Grace to you and peace"

- In seven of his epistles, he uses the specific phrase found here in Romans, "Grace to you and peace from God our father and the Lord Jesus Christ",²²

¹⁸ Hendriksen, 47.

¹⁹ F.F. Bruce, *Tyndale NT Commentaries, Romans*, 71.

²⁰ Mounce, 64.

²¹ Cranfield, 72.

²² Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Philemon.

When I attended Bible school in North Carolina, the men would greet one another with “brother”

- “Good morning, brother”
- “Have a good weekend, brother”

It took some getting used to

- However, it quickly became apparent that this title reminded us of our spiritual brotherhood
- We were in the same spiritual family

Paul’s use of this phrase wasn’t just a cultural thing

- Paul combined the common greetings of the day in a deliberate effort to emphasize the grace and peace that comes from God alone

Imagine if we all greeted one another with this phrase, “**Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ**”

- Can you hear the spiritual overtones that this conveys?
 - o Grace – unmerited favor
 - o Peace – the absence of hostility with God
 - o God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ – the source of all spiritual blessing

How different this is from, “Good morning!” or “How are you?”

These first seven verses of Romans give us a snapshot of the entire book of Romans

- The content of these seven verses will be expounded upon in the remaining chapters

This morning, we have been given several helpful reminders that you can take with you

- 1. God is the Source of all spiritual blessings**
 - a. You and I don’t deserve or merit anything good from God
- 2. God desires and expects obedience and holiness from the lives of those who claim to know Him**
 - a. We are to be different from the unbelieving world around us
- 3. The Gospel is to be proclaimed to the entire world, without exception**
- 4. Christians are those who have been Divinely called of God**
 - a. This should humble us and cause us to be grateful for God’s initiative in our lives
- 5. Christians are those who are eternally beloved by God**
 - a. Nothing can separate us from the love of God!

Sometimes Phil has us sing the doxology

- You know the words

Praise God from whom all blessings flow²³

Praise Him, all creatures here below;

Praise Him above, ye Heavenly host

Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost

²³ <http://www.cyberhymnal.org/htm/p/r/praisegf.htm>

God is the Source of all spiritual blessing (Eph 1:3)

- As James writes, "Every good thing bestowed and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation, or shifting shadow" (Jas 1:17)

If you are here this morning as a Christian, I praise God for His work in your life

- I can greet you in the name of Jesus Christ
- "grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ"

But if you are here this morning and you do not have a relationship with Jesus Christ, then I can't greet you with God's grace

- Instead, I would challenge you and urge you to repent of your sins

You see, friend, the same God who extends grace also issues forth judgment and wrath

- He gives grace to those who understand that their sins have made a separation between them and the holy God
- He gives judgment upon those who reject His Son and refuse to submit to His Lordship

I pray that if you are here without Jesus Christ, that today will be the day of salvation