

Romans Chapter 1

Verses 1-7

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The New Testament Book we call Romans has been almost universally acknowledged as the greatest of Paul's letters. It certainly is the widest in scope. Some of the greatest leaders of Church history came to their understanding of God's will through Romans (St Augustine Chapter 13 - Martin Luther, Verse 17 Chapter 1, John Bunyan Pilgrim's Progress, John Wesley from Luther's preface to the commentary on Romans). Many have written that it is the greatest (most encompassing) letter ever written.

- Paul's epistle to the church in Rome was written about 56-58 AD, from Corinth on third missionary journey. The epistle was written about 30 years after Jesus was crucified and resurrected. Memories of those events were still very fresh on the minds of the Saints when Romans was written.

- Paul wrote his letter to teach the Christians in Rome and to bring to their remembrance the meaning of the fantastic events relating to Jesus' life, death and resurrection that had so startled and amazed men in that 1st century

The first 7 verses of Romans make up Paul's introduction and a statement of the theme of his letter.

Was Romans a letter written to those who lived in Rome in the year 57 AD or to those living around the world in the year 2010 AD?

It is easy to view Paul's letter (epistle) to the congregation in Rome as a document written for the ages, and to view it as his intent and effort to lay out beliefs and doctrine he wanted to share with us in the point in history we occupy and against the conditions we see in the world today. As much as those thoughts seem to be true, Paul's intent was to write a personal message of hope and encouragement to a specific group of people; the members of several Christian Home Church congregations who were meeting to worship the Lord in Rome in and around 57 AD. As we read Paul's epistle in the light of a document intended to be very specific to the congregations of Rome in 57 AD, it is difficult not to be strongly impacted with the incredible working of the Holy Spirit as Paul was used to minister to us across time to our point in history in his 57 AD letter to the believers of his time, who lived in Rome.

The format of Romans:

In his letters, Paul uses a standard format for letters written in his time.

1 - He begins by introducing himself and greeting the ones to whom the letter is addressed, He states the theme of his correspondence.

2 – He offers his personal concern, support and prayers

3 – He covers one or more intended subjects (the reason for writing the letter)

4 – He sends greetings as he closes the correspondence.

Romans 1

The Gospel Exalted

¹Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, ²which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures, ³concerning His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh, ⁴who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord, ⁵through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for His name's sake, ⁶among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ; ⁷to all who are beloved of God in Rome, called as saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

In the first seven verses of his greeting, Paul identifies himself and then lists the theme of his letter. He will return to this theme time after time in the letter. Paul's theme is like a target, with Christ residing in the central portion - the bull's eye.

1 - Jesus Christ our Lord

The heart of Paul's argument is the central personage of Jesus Christ. Everything surrounds him. We are not followers of a philosophy or a philosopher. We follow a savior, a redeemer, a person, God's Son. Union in Christ is the central truth that God wants us to see.

In Colossians Paul writes of "**Christ in you, the hope of glory,**" (Colossians 1:27b NIV).

From this central truth (Christ), all other things follow.

2 - The Gospel of Jesus Christ

3 - The Apostle who brings the message of the Gospel.

4 - The recipients of the Gospel - first the Christians - the Romans to whom the letter was written, then outward from there, across history to us, today - to any Christians who might read the letter.

5 - The nations of the World - both Jew and Gentile.

¹Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God,

In Verse 1, Paul introduces himself and offers his credentials. He has chosen to be a servant of Christ Jesus. He has freely bound himself to Christ. In this, he has been selected (called) to be an apostle and has been set apart for service to the gospel of God.

Paul did not use the term “bond-servant” loosely. He knew what this term indicated and was certain those in Rome would understand his words.

Bond-servant = δούλος *doulos*

Of Christ = Χριστός *Christos*

Jesus = Ἰησοῦς *Iēsous*

Rome was filled with slaves. They came from all of the lands brought under subjection by the army of Rome. After military defeat and during occupation, thousands of people were pulled into slavery to Roman citizens. Most completed their obligation after some period of time and eventually regained their freedom. This was not the case with those who were classified as bond-servants. A bond-servant chose their situation. They freely and willingly chose to enter into a contract of servant-hood that was binding from that point until their death. In this statement, Paul was telling the Roman believers that he chose to indenture himself and his life to Christ Jesus.

Obviously, Paul had no problem with designating himself as a bond-servant he also had no problem with identifying Jesus as the Christ (messiah)

“Called as an Apostle” – Paul understood the circumstances of his conversion as reported by Luke in Acts, Chapter 9. He knew firsthand the direction chosen for his life by his master. In Paul’s mind his entry into Apostleship was at the direction of Christ Jesus.

“Set apart for the gospel of God” – Paul had been set apart. His life had one purpose. His actions were single minded. What was his purpose? His purpose was God’s Good News! The only answer to any question concerning what God’s good news was is covered by the answer “Jesus Christ”, with everything that name encompasses.

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

All of Jewish history points toward God’s promise, which was the messiah and all of the prophets point toward Jesus. All of the sacrifices of the Old Testament point toward Jesus. All of the great messianic passages of the Old Testament point toward Jesus. To read the Old Testament is to understand that someone is coming, but as the Old Testament ends, he has not yet come. Then the New Testament begins with the story of his birth. Jesus is the one who was promised beforehand.

³concerning His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh, ⁴who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord,

In his human nature (according to the flesh), Jesus came from David. In his divine nature he came as the Son of God. In the uniqueness of Christ Jesus, we have all that is human and divine. In his

human form, Jesus came as a man, filled with God. That is our hope. There is no way we can be like God, but in Christ, we can become like a man filled with God.

Paul says that three things mark the deity of Christ Jesus.

- He came by Power

Jesus had God's power. He performed miracles, what John called "signs". He knew what was in men's hearts.

- He came by the spirit of holiness

He was a whole man, His life was complete in righteousness, what God intended for us to be.

- There was the resurrection of Jesus

His deity was authenticated by his resurrection from the dead. Death had no power over him. The resurrection happened. Our faith rests on it.

Jesus was declared to be the son of God and to have God's power through his resurrection from the dead. This Gospel (good news) of God that Paul has been set aside for is Christ Jesus, God's son and our Lord.

He is "**Jesus Christ our Lord**"

- He is Jesus the one sent to free his people
- He is Christ – Messiah. He is the promise of God, Fulfilled to God's people.
- He is Lord – Ruler, King, Leader, The one with authority
- He is "our" Lord – We have him, with us, over us and for us. He is not the Lord of someone else. He is "Our Lord"

⁵through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for His name's sake, ⁶among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ; ⁷to all who are beloved of God in Rome, called as saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul recognizes his apostleship and the grace he receives come from God, through Christ. He was set aside for obedience through faith for the Gentiles, to bring the Gospel to the Gentiles, for the sake of the name of Jesus Christ.

Paul tells us here that the Romans are called. They are the called of Jesus Christ. They were not self made saints. They were not man made saints. God called them to be saints.

- Those who were Jews by Birth were called
- Those who had converted to Judaism were called.
- Those who were Gentile were called.

- Everyone who comes was called.
- Sadly, all who do not come were also called.

All of us have our own story about our acceptance of salvation and our coming to Christ. Our individual stories relate to how God called each of us. One fact is the same. God called us. God sought us out

That is why Jesus said to his disciples, "**All that the Father has given me will come unto me, and him who comes unto me I will never cast out,**" (John 6:37)

Beloved of God

The next remarkable thing in this passage is that we are loved by God. Paul tells the Romans that they are "**beloved of God**". Paul always starts out this way. God loves us and everything starts from there.

This is the basis and the foundation of our relationship with God. God loves us.

Grace and Peace

The grace and peace that God gives us is proof of his love for us. Grace stands for all of the blessings God can give, all of the power and enrichment he offers. We never earn His grace. It is a gift, given in response to our daily needs. All of the courage and comfort God offers in response to our need and discouragement are His grace. All of His healing of spirit comes from His grace. The result of these things is peace. It is peace that God gives us. Grace and Peace - these are our inheritance as Christians.

Paul offers this grace and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. As these things come from the Father God, they also come from the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.