

**EXPOSITION OF ROMANS**  
**"The Good News of God" Part I**  
**Romans 1:1-7**

**Mililani Community Church**  
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Today we begin a verse by verse exposition of the book of Romans. As we said in the introduction to the book two weeks ago, this book is the most basic, most comprehensive statement of true Christianity. It has become for Christians the most influential document ever written. This morning we are looking at Paul's greeting to the Christians at Rome. These seven verses are one long sentence in the Greek text--of 126 words. They are packed with truth. The greeting is split into two parts. In between is a parenthesis. The parenthesis begins in verse 2.

The ideas in these verses unfold almost like the unfolding of a beautiful flower. It begins with Paul. What about Paul? Paul is a servant of Jesus Christ; he is called to be an apostle; he is separated unto the gospel of God. What about the gospel? It was promised a long time ago, Paul says, and it concerns God's Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. What about Him? He was descended from the line of David physically, and He was shown to be the powerful Son of God by His resurrection from the dead. Through Him Paul received grace and apostleship to call people from all the nations to the obedience of faith in Him. And that introduces us to those in Rome who had placed their faith in Him--the saints at Rome. What about the saints at Rome? Just three things: They are called to belong to Jesus Christ, loved by God and called to be saints. So there are four divisions in this sentence: (1) the messenger of God, Paul, (2) the gospel of God, (3) the Son of God, and (4) the saints of God.

**Let's consider first . . .**

**THE MESSENGER OF GOD**

*"Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus. . ."* Paul was what we might call today a super-achiever. He could have introduced himself by a long list of accomplishments. He could have cited his ancestry, his marvelous education at the feet of the greatest teacher of his day, Gamaliel, he could have mentioned his degrees, his success in founding many churches, even his writings. But he doesn't. Why? Not because he was embarrassed about these things. Not because he did not value them. Paul overlooks all these achievements because what he was most concerned about overshadowed them all. Above all else, Paul saw himself as a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ.

There are at least six Greek words translated servant in the NT. Paul uses the very strongest of them. It should be translated "bond-slave." The picture of this word (doulos) a slave market: a slave is placed upon the block; the auctioneer stands up and auctions him off; somebody buys him, and he becomes a bond-slave. Paul says, "I'm a doulos--a bond-slave of Jesus Christ." In other words, Jesus has purchased him, and now all that he is and all that he has--his time, his strength, his talents, even life itself--no longer belongs to Paul but belongs to Christ.

We also are the bond-slaves of Christ. Because he bought us with his own precious blood. If you remember that, you will love to be called a servant of the Lord. I am not only obliged to serve Him, but I am His possession! He is responsible for me--to take care of me and to provide for me.

*"Called to be an apostle. . ."* What is an apostle? Two things were necessary to qualify a man to be an apostle. First he must have seen the Lord after his resurrection. Paul had that qualification. "Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord?" (I Cor. 9:1). Secondly, his call had to come directly from the Lord Himself. When the Lord spoke to Ananias about Paul in Acts 9:15, he said, "This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel" In Galatians 1:1 we read, "Paul, an apostle--sent not from men nor by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised him from the dead."

The word apostle is not a general word applied to every Christian. An apostle was personally called, chosen and commissioned by Jesus Christ himself to be his representative in the first century. They laid the foundation of the church. An apostle spoke with the authority of Christ himself. Because Paul is writing as an apostle, the book of Romans is not good advice, or simply the ideas of Paul, but this is the Word of God given through his apostle.

The third phrase Paul uses to introduce himself to the believers in Rome is . . .  
*"set apart for the gospel of God--"* There were three distinct separations that took place in the life of Paul. The first was God's hand on his life from his mother's womb. Galatians 1:15: "God set me apart from birth and called me by his grace. . ." The second separation came as Paul was on the road to Damascus, when God separated him from the world (Acts 9). The third occurred at Antioch, when the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." (Acts 13:3).

So Paul was a purchased slave, a called apostle, and a separated preacher of the gospel. We can't all be apostles, because there were no more after those first ones. But we are purchased, called, and separated. He purchased us with His own blood. He called us and now we are set apart--not to live any longer for ourselves but for Christ and His glory.

**Secondly we consider. . .**  
**THE GOSPEL OF GOD**

What about the gospel?

The word gospel means "good news." So gospel of God means "good news from God." "I want you to know, brothers, that the gospel I preached is not something that man made up." Galatians 1:11. This is not our gospel, it is not man's ideas, or man's advice, I wasn't taught it by man; it is the gospel of God. It comes from God. It is His good news. He is the source of this great plan of salvation.

Of this gospel, he says two things:

First, it was promised beforehand through His prophets, and this promise was recorded in the Holy Scriptures. The gospel is not something that began with the apostles. They proclaimed it. But it was promised by God through the prophets in the Holy in the Old Testament scriptures. To take just one instance, Isaiah the prophet wrote in ISAIAH 53:6: "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." The first eight chapters of Romans are packed into that one little verse in the Old Testament.

The Gospel is nothing new. It was promised before. It is not some new thing that God hastily threw together as a remedy after the ruin and wreck of humanity. It is the old gospel. It goes way back even before the fall--even before the creation of the world. I Peter 1:19-20 says Jesus was the lamb chosen by God before the creation of the world.

Second, the gospel is "*regarding His Son.*" The true gospel, is the gospel that has to do with Jesus. The message of the gospel is about the Son of God, Jesus Christ our Lord, and the salvation God has accomplished for us and announced to us through Him. Anything that is not centered in Jesus Christ is not the gospel of God.

**Thirdly, then...**  
**THE SON OF GOD**

What about the Son of God? Paul says four things about Him:

**His Name.** His name is: "Son of God, Jesus Christ our Lord." "Son" defines his unique relationship to the Father. "Jesus" speaks of His humanity; He is the man Jesus. "Christ" speaks of His Messianic office; He is the Anointed One. "Lord" speaks of His exalted position and person; He is the Lord Jehovah. The order of these words is significant. He is first the Son of God, and as the Son of God He existed from all eternity. In the fullness of time, the eternal Son of God humbled Himself to be born of a virgin, and the angel announced, "His name shall be called Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins." Jesus lived for thirty years on the earth. He finally came to the day when He when He went down to the Jordan and was baptized; and the Spirit of God anointed Him, which is what "Christ" means. Then he began His Messianic ministry.

When Jesus asked his disciples, "Who do you say I am?" Peter answered, "You are the Messiah (Christ), the Son of the living God" (Matt. 16:16). He offered Himself as the Messiah of Israel, the Anointed One, but He was rejected by His people. Then, "He humbled himself, and became obedient even unto death, the death of the cross. Wherefore also God highly exalted him, and gave unto him a name which is above every name: that in the name of Jesus . . . every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord" (Phil. 2:8-11).

If Jesus is who the apostle Paul says He is in this letter and throughout the NT, there is no other reasonable or right option open to you than total and heart-deep allegiance to Him. Colonel Robert Ingersoll, the famous agnostic of the 1900s, was not a friend of Christianity. But he saw certain things clearly; and he said on one occasion, although in a critical vein: "Christianity cannot live in peace with any other form of faith. If that religion be true, there is but one Savior, one inspired book, and but one little narrow . . . path that leads to heaven. Such a religion is necessarily uncompromising." That statement by Ingersoll is true because the Lord himself is uncompromising. Is Jesus the eternal Son of God, who became a man for your salvation? Is he really Jesus Christ the Lord? If he is, you must obey God's call--God's good news-- turn from all your sin and follow him as your Lord.

The meaning of this title "Lord" shows why the early Christians refused to apply the name "Lord" to any other. If they had done so, they would have been repudiating Christ. One famous case is the aged Bishop of Smyrna, Polycarp, who was martyred on February 22, 156 A.D. As he was driven to the arena, two of the city officials, who had respect for him because of his age and reputation, tried to persuade him to comply with the demand to honor Caesar. "What harm is there in saying, "Caesar is Lord," and burning incense to him. . . and saving yourself?" they asked. Polycarp refused. Later, in the arena, he explained his position, saying, "For eighty-six years I have been Christ's slave, and he has done me no wrong; how can I blaspheme my king who saved me?" Polycarp refused to call Caesar "Lord," because "Lord" meant "God" and there can only be one God. If Polycarp had called Caesar "Lord," then Jesus could not have been "Lord" for Polycarp, and Polycarp could not have been a Christian.

In verse 3 Paul speaks of **His Humanity**. "As to his human nature he was a descendant of David." He was a real human being. A real man. Our Lord's humanity came from the seed of David. In the last letter Paul wrote, he said to Timothy, "Remember Jesus Christ, descended from David." (II Tim. 2:8). The opening sentence of the book of Matthew refers to "Jesus Christ, the son of David." and when we come to the closing chapter of the NT, we hear the voice of the Lord in glory declaring His final message, "I, Jesus. . . am the root and the offspring of David" (Rev. 22:16). Jesus was a real man, descended from King David.

In verse 4 Paul speaks of **His Deity**. "and who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord." First came the statement about His humanity, "the descendant of David," and now we see His deity. As to his human nature he was a descendant of David. According to the spirit of holiness He is the Son of God.

The expression "spirit of holiness" is not a reference to the Holy Spirit, although the HS could be called "the Spirit of Holiness." This is an expression used to designate the being or essence of God, for God is first of all spirit. The divine essence of which the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit all partake is "the spirit of holiness." As to his human nature he is a descendant of David. "According to the spirit of holiness" he is the Son of God. Here we see that Jesus is both God and Man--He is the unique God-man. Fully God and fully man. He was eternally God, but at the incarnation He took on human flesh and became a man.

Notice it says, Jesus was "declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead." In the Greek text, the words "with power" are linked to "Son of God," so we could more correctly understand Paul to be saying here: "He was declared to be the powerful Son of God, by His resurrection from the dead." He came in weakness, despised and rejected of men. But in His resurrection we come to realize how powerful He really is. The word "declared" here means: "to mark out by a sure sign." The Jews came to Jesus one day and said, "What miraculous sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?" (John 2:18). Jesus answered: "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days." The sign of the resurrection declared Him to be what He truly was: the powerful Son of God.

Not only is His resurrection accomplished through His power--but He is going to raise everyone someday. Jesus said: "I tell you the truth, a time is coming. . .when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live. . . Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their grace will hear his voice and come out--those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned." (John 5:25, 28). The resurrection of all mankind will be a confirming sign of his deity.

Paul says in Philippians 3:20-21: "But our citizenship is in heaven; and we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body." (Phil. 3:20-21).

Fourthly, **His Authority**. "Through him and for his name's sake, we received grace and apostleship to call people from among all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith." (v. 5). The grace referred to here is God's favor toward Paul in giving him the marvelous privilege of being an apostle and preaching the gospel--God's good news!--"the unsearchable riches of Christ" he calls it in Ephesians 3:8.

This division closes with the PURPOSE, the SCOPE and the MOTIVE of Paul's apostleship.

The **PURPOSE** is to call people to the obedience of faith. The NIV says, "to call people from among all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith." There are two ways this phrase can be interpreted. **FIRST** it can be interpreted to mean the obedience which faith produces," as the NIV does. **THE OTHER WAY** and this is the way the best commentators interpret it, and the way the NASB translates it: "the obedience of faith." That is. . . .faith itself is obedience!! Paul's commission was to call people to obey God by receiving His Son. We should present the Gospel as Paul did--as a command to be obeyed. When the gospel is preached, it must be preached not merely as an invitation to receive Christ. It must be preached as a command. We are commanded to turn from our sinful disobedience to God and obey him by believing in and following the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior. How often do we hear in today's evangelism the gospel being offered to people as something good for them and that will make them happy--but they they are at perfect liberty to refuse. That is wrong. James Boice says: "By failing to present the gospel as a command to be obeyed we minimize sin, trivialize discipleship, rob God of his glory, and delude some into thinking that all is well with their souls when actually they are without Christ and are perishing."

The **SCOPE** is "all the Gentiles or all the nations." The **MOTIVE** is "for his name's sake." That is the highest of all motives. Why am I a preacher of the gospel. Primarily for the sake of His name.

**Finally. . .**

## **THE SAINTS OF GOD**

Note three things about the saints:

**Called to belong to Jesus Christ.** We are those who have been called. Jesus called us, and He called us to belong to Him. To be his possession in this world. Think of yourself that way. Illustration: When I was in college, I bought my first car--a brand new Volkswagon. I think I paid \$1,200.00 dollars for it. I remember how concerned I was about where I parked it--I didn't want anyone to scratch it. I was often worried about it. But I remember the day I said, Lord, I'm tired of worrying about this car. From now on, its yours Lord. I'll just be your driver, and I'll do my best to take care of it. What a relief that was! What a relief it is when you do the same thing with your whole life. I'm your's Lord. All I am and have belongs to you. Do with me as you will. It takes the burden away. And you can rest in the Lord.

**Loved by God.** Christ is God's beloved Son, and if we belong to Him, then we are loved by God, because He is loved. In Ephesians 1:6, we are "accepted in the Beloved."

**Called to be saints.** The words "to be" are not actually in the Greek text. It just says "called saints." Sainthood is not a goal to be attained in the future. We are not going to be saints, we ARE SAINTS. I have heard some Christians whose lives are not what they ought to be give the excuse: "I don't pretend to be a saint!" It doesn't matter what you pretend to be--if you are a Christian, you are a saint!! You must accept your position and then live in conformity with it.

The word saint does not mean what it means to many people: someone who has attained a certain level of holiness and is worthy of some special veneration or even of hearing human prayers. NO. In the Bible being a saint just means being set apart to God and His work. You are loved by God, called by God to belong to His son, and set apart to Him to live for Him and work for Him in this world. This is why their faith was being reported all over the world. They were different from the culture around them and people noticed it (v. 8).

**CONCLUSION:** Paul concludes by saying, "Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ." We were saved by grace and we can only live the Christian life by grace. We live in troubling times. So much around us to trouble us. But we can live peacefully in the midst of it all by drawing daily on the strength the Lord provides. He has a wonderful and inexhaustible supply of grace and peace. Just as we live moment by moment by drawing breaths of God's air, so we must live spiritually moment by moment by drawing on his favor.

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