

Transcription of 21ID3600

Romans 1:1-7

"By Way of An Introduction"

November 17, 2021

All right. Let's open our Bibles to my favorite book in the Bible. It's always my favorite. Whatever we're doing is my favorite. The book of Romans 1:1.

I hope that you are willing to think a bit as we go through this book. This is a theology book that doesn't apply anything to do until chapter 12. So for the first eleven chapters, there are statements of truth that you should hang your hat on and hang your life on. Theology is much more difficult to study than narrative. Narrative - the entire Old Testament history is narrative. The gospels, for the most part, are narrative. The book of Acts is all narrative. Narrative, you just read the story, and the demand of narrative is that you put yourself in the story; stand next to whoever's doing whatever and say, "Well, what would the Lord want me to learn here?" But this is different. This is the kind of stuff you've got to sit down and think about and pray through and get ahold of, and it's a joy, but it's work. And so I hope that you'll work through it with us.

There's an old saying that all roads lead to Rome. That was a saying, by the way, already in the days of Paul. It is tracked back actually to the 1st century. Paul loved the idea of going to Rome. By the time he writes this letter, he's in his 50's, maybe later 50's. He saw it as an opportunity of a lifetime to go where all of the world went sooner or later. It really was a dream of an evangelist to stand in the crossroads of the world. And yet for years, though it was in his heart, it wasn't in his schedule. God had shut doors and closed doors and kept Paul from going no matter how much he wanted to go. Paul spent much of his adult life on three very extensive missionary journeys (they are recorded in Acts 13 through about chapter 21 or so). And eventually God would allow him to go to Rome but not at all like he planned. He would go in handcuffs, accused of insurrection, having a meeting with Caesar who may or may not have let him go. And the story is found in the last two chapters of the book of Acts, Acts chapters 27 and 28. But on his third missionary journey, as Paul was hurrying, literally, to get back to Jerusalem for the Passover, Paul took a stop for the third time in Corinth. It was a wicked, very thriving port. It was in the province of Achaia. It was in southern Greece. This last trip of Paul's was to get as many Gentile churches as he could and to collect from them donations for the poor in Jerusalem; and ask them to send their representative, their pastor, their accountant - whoever it might have been - an

elder, with them so that they could just kind of watch the money go to these poor in Jerusalem, with Paul's idea that if you could show up with that kind of love from the Gentile churches, maybe those uptight believers in Jerusalem - who are all about be a Jew first and then a Christian (they didn't know about grace so much; it was a big struggle for them) - might somehow soften to the idea of God pouring His grace upon everyone. It didn't go so well, but that was what Paul was doing when he went to Corinth for the third time. It was in this city, during those three months that he was there, that he wrote this letter before he would go to Jerusalem, be arrested, and then that long process of two years of prison here and travel to Rome, two years of house arrest there, his hearing before Nero, his being allowed to leave for maybe a year-and-a-half or so (we don't really know where he went), his second arrest, and then ultimately his beheading. So it's towards the end of his life, so to speak, certainly towards the tele-end of his life. But he had been so longing to go to Rome.

He wrote, in fact, in the end of the book here - let me see if I can get way towards the end - in chapter 15:20, he said he had a desire in his heart to come to Rome and that if that would work out, he would come and just be a servant to them, if you will. And so it was something that he longed to do. But he was in a hurry to go to the Passover in Jerusalem. So three months wasn't really that long for all that he was doing. It was about 58 or so A.D. And there in the church in Cenchræa, which was the eastern harbor of Corinth (if you've seen a map, Corinth is on two ports, if you will, two sides of the isthmus), there was a lady there named Phoebe who was wanting to go to Rome, and she really didn't know anyone there, but Paul did. Paul knew Aquila and Priscilla - you remember them (he ministered with them before and would again in Ephesus). They were in Rome, had a study in their home, and so Paul offered, volunteered, if you will, "I'll write you a letter of introduction so that when you get there, they won't wonder who you are. They'll know that you're known by others." And though Paul had never been there, certainly his name was well known. So if you read chapter 16 of this book, that's what Paul intended to do. He intended to write a letter of introduction; say hello to all the people that he did know there. But Paul had never been to Rome, and so he would use this recommendation letter to introduce himself to the church who knew nothing about him; which is maybe why this letter reads so much differently than every letter that Paul writes. He's writing to people that had never known him personally. He spends an awful lot of time even introducing himself. In fact, for the first two weeks - down through verse 17 - before he gets into it, we're going to look at Paul's introduction. "This is who I am. This is why I'm doing what I'm doing. This is my

motive for ministry. This is how I see God's calling. This is what I hope for you." And it is a lot longer than it would usually have been, but he has no experience with these people, no details, no understanding of any problems they might have had, or challenges. He doesn't know anything about them, and he'd never been there.

Yet by the time he puts down his pen, Paul had written this very long letter, not of recommendation but a theological masterpiece. Literally one of the most important Bible documents in history. The gospel according to Paul. Or as Pastor Chuck used to say, "The gospel according to grace." It is the most theological outlook and conviction that Paul has about his relationship with God's sin and God's salvation and all. It is systematic. It is written in almost a question-and-answer approach, in the sense that the thoughts are very heavy, the application is very practical and necessary, but it is a powerful book.

And there are many people who will tell you - folks that we would know well; well, we don't know them, but we've heard of them - that got saved reading this book. In fact, here's a quote out of Romans 13:14. Paul wrote this, "Put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts." Saint Augustine, reading that, in North Africa, sitting in the garden of his friend in Italy, in September of 386 A.D., said, "That verse brought me to my knees, and I gave my life to Christ." Saint Augustine. I'd like to have a name that starts with saint as well. Wouldn't you? Saint. I just can't call him Augustine. A thousand years later, a monk named Martin Luther, who was in the Roman Catholic Church order named after Saint Augustine, began to read this book to his students at the Wittenberg University (at the time). This was.....he was born in 1483, so maybe 1510 or so A.D. And as he began to read chapter 7 - and I'll read to you what he says that he read - he read this, in verse 14, "For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin." And Martin Luther said he read that and went, "Ohhh, that's me! The law is good, God's ways are good, but I'm not good at all." And, as a result, he gave his life to Christ. Two centuries later, an ordained minister in the Church of England named John Wesley - he was born in 1703, so he lived till.....I think he was 88 years old when he died, old timer, and he preached a lot - went to church, the Church of England, and heard the pastor in the Church of England read the preface that Luther had written to the Romans, the book. He was attending a place there in England called Aldersgate Street Society, and he wrote that on May 24th of 1738, at the age of 35, hearing just about the subject matter of this book, he gave his life to Christ. The book of Romans moves hearts. There was a tinker - a tinker was an itinerant tinsmith - named John Bunyan who

was - he lived in 1630 or something like that. He became a spiritual giant while he was in the Bedford Prison. He read the book of Romans, gave his life to the Lord and, as a result, he wrote *The Pilgrim's Progress*. As a result of reading this book. So.....he said of the book of Romans, "I learned the gospel from every angle that I could possibly imagine."

The book quotes the Old Testament some fifty-seven times, more than any other New Testament book. The six most-used words in the book - and it's used a lot - are the words God and law and Christ and sin and Lord and faith. It is a book that really goes after the questions about sin and death, about Hell and salvation, about how man has gotten to where he is today. It's a book for the Millennium. It writes about adultery and civil disobedience, lying and homosexuality in the last days. And, like I said, Paul spends a lot of time in it because nobody knows who he is, and so he wants to be sure that they do. And so it's very personal. Paul writes much about his vulnerabilities and his concerns and wants them to know him, where he's coming from.

The book can divide itself fairly easily into three topics. The first eight chapters are all about sin. I know. Come back in chapter 9. It's all about the doctrine of sin, and you should....well, we'll think about it. We'll see what the Lord will teach us. Then he will turn from the doctrine of sin to the grace of God that saves us from our sin and ends with here's what God wants to do, not only in saving us but in sanctifying us, delivering us from our sin.

In the first tonight - and we're just going to go down through verse 7 - Paul gives to us some of his perceptions. He writes about his perception of himself, how he views himself, though he's been at this for decades. He writes about his preaching; how does he view his responsibility and commission from the Lord. And then he finally ends by saying to the Roman believers, "Here is how I see you." So this is all about Paul's view of himself, his preaching, his calling and his audience. And then next week he will continue to kind of give us insights into how he saw himself and what he believed God wanted to do with his life before we get to chapter 1:18, where Paul begins this very heavy-duty, chapter upon chapter, outline of sin and the theology of sin and how we should understand it from God's standpoint. So, good for you being here tonight. I hope I don't chase you off before we're done.

Verse 1 says this, "Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated to the gospel of God." Paul saw himself as a bondservant. Greek word

"*doulos*." A slave was certainly well known in the Roman Empire; two-thirds of the population under Roman occupation were slaves. They were without rights. They were owned by somebody else. They were used at the discretion of the owner. Tough way to live. No one was more aware of the blessings of freedom than Paul because Paul had the unique gift from the Lord to have been born in a city that provided free access to citizenship for everyone born in this - what it was, basically - a soldiers' town. And so Paul was given by the Lord a free-birth citizenship that would serve him well although, to be honest with you, he really didn't use it very much. He didn't seem to lean on it very much. Even if it could have gotten him out of a beating or two, he didn't seem to bring it up. He was sure, though. And understand - that living in a culture where almost everyone's a slave and you get a break, you start off with your foot in the right place - that Paul might have written about freedom and, "Oh, man, it's so good not to be somebody's slave." But from his own view of himself, the greatest blessing he could see himself was that he was a bondsman to Jesus, that the honor of the position to him was, "I'm God's servant, chosen to be there, and He wants me there as well." I thought about.....Paul could have written, "I'm probably one of the greatest theologians of my generation." He could have written lots of books on church planting because he was good at it, better than most folks. But instead, here was an honest appraisal of himself. He wrote to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 4:1), and he said, "I am a" (he used the word) "*huperetes*," which means, "I'm an underrower," somebody who would sit at the bottom of the boat and just one of the galley guys that would row. And he said, "When it comes to the church, I see myself as a galley slave for Jesus." To the Corinthians, he said in 2 Corinthians 3:6, "I am a *diakonos*." "I'm a waiter who waits tables for the Lord." His self-image - from a guy that, like I said, had been around for three decades - was that he was God's servant or God's slave. Jesus will say to the disciples, in Mark 10:45, "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." That's what Paul saw himself as, a servant. And he presented himself that way to the Romans.

An Old Testament slave under Jewish law (as a slave) would, because of the Jewish law, have the opportunity - because of God's goodness in the law - to be set free on the seventh year; that he would be allowed to go free unless he wanted to stay with his master because he loved the master, he was treated well. Or he was married during that time, so then the wife would also belong to the master or the children. And so he might stay for their sake. But he had a choice to make, and if he chose to stay as a slave - and you can read the parameters of the law in Exodus

21 - then it would be permanent. In other words, he would be that way for the rest of his life. He didn't get, like, two years later, "I want to think about it. I've changed my mind." It's a one-time lifetime decision.

And Paul, when he had met the Lord, decided early on in his spiritual life that he was only interested in pleasing the Lord. "I'm going to be his servant." When Paul wrote to the Galatians in chapter 1:10, he said to them, "For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ." So Paul's focus was, "I'm going to make the Lord happy. I'm His. I belong to Him. I've given my life to Him, and I'm going to follow." And on that dusty road that led into Damascus, when Paul had met the Lord (Acts 9), and he got knocked to his back or however it took place - he got blinded - he said, "Who are You, Lord?" Those were the words that came out of his mouth. And the Lord said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting." And the next word out of Paul's mouth was, "Lord, what do You want me to do?" "What do You want from me?" And Paul's instant words of surrender had not changed over the years. He would write to the Philippians (3:7-8), later on from jail, "Everything that was a gain to me I count as loss for Christ. And for the excellent knowledge of Him who is my Lord, I'll suffer the loss of all things just to be sure that He's the Lord."

So Paul, in his introduction to a church that had never met him - and it was a huge city and certainly a very large church from all that we can gather - Paul wanted them to know his view of himself. And though it had been years since he had gotten to know the Lord, there was a very present-tense component to his mindset. "I am God's slave." And that hadn't changed at all. Jesus said to the disciples, John 15:15, "No longer do I call you '*doulos*;' " this word, "for a '*doulos*' does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you." He said to them, as far as privilege (us, as well), "You're not just servants. You're part of the family. I'm letting you know what's going on." And yet, even though the Lord said that, Peter and James and Paul and Jude and John all took the title, "Call me God's servant." "Yeah, but I'm not calling you that anymore. You're My friends." "Yeah, but I still am your servant," and they kept that relationship in heart, and it drove them forward. It was the ultimate position of freedom for them, was to belong to the Lord. So, that was his first view of himself.

Secondly, he said, "Not only am I His servant by choice, I've also been called by Him to be an apostle." So, when he became God's bondservant, he also - over time -

discovered God's calling for his life. The word "called" appears three different times in these first seven verses. The word is "*kletos*." It means to designate or, if you will, to be invited to a special place. Paul did not appoint himself to be an apostle. He didn't become an apostle through his own willpower. He didn't become an apostle through hard work. He didn't become an apostle through politicking. He didn't become an apostle through a search committee or through a volunteer effort. The very word says God invited him to this position. God wanted Paul to be an apostle. Which is exactly why it is so wrong for us to value status when it comes to calling. The glory in anything that God gives you to do is that you do it. It really doesn't matter what place along a ladder or whatever ladder you may have found that you look at or value, no matter what the world might value for position, you just want to be where God invites you. Right? This is where your calling is to your life. And thirty years in, Paul said, "I've chosen to be God's servant. He's invited me to be an apostle. This was His work, not mine. This didn't come from me, this came from Him." And the disaster, of course, in our lives is always when we stop being His servant and try to pursue the place where He hasn't called us or invited us. Some of you can't sing. You are not invited to the pulpit to sing. Some of you can't play an instrument. You're not invited to come up here and lead the band. Some of you are. And that's where you should be.....wherever God invites you. When things got tough in the ministry for Paul - and they were about to get, in the next five or six years, extremely difficult in every way - Paul constantly comforted himself in the fact that God had summoned him here. So the difficulties he was facing were not because he was in the wrong place but because he was in the right place. He was right where God wanted him to be. And so he saw himself - and I don't know how you view yourself and your service and your relationship with the Lord - but God has invited you somewhere to serve Him, and that's His invitation to you. His lifework was to do God's will. The Lord said, in Acts 9, to the fellow that would go pray for Paul, "He's a chosen vessel for Me to bear My name to the Gentiles, to the kings, and to Israel." "He's My chosen.....I'm inviting him to do this work." When Paul was there in the church in Antioch, and the Lord, in Acts 13:2, separated Paul to go out to do this ministry work and missions work that would become, really, the subject of the book of Acts from that day forward, the Lord said to the elders, as they were fasting and praying, "Separate for Me Barnabas and Paul for the work I've called them to do." He was invited to do this work. I don't know where you're invited, but I know God's invited you. And the comfort is you find out where you're called. And Paul was very faithful to the calling. He will say, at the end of this book - chapter 15:19, "I have fully preached the gospel of Christ."

Now there's some general-sense apostleship; it just means one who is sent out. There are a lot of apostles in the Bible that you don't hear much from again, but it's a description of what they do. But there were especially eleven apostles - if we remove Judas - and Paul, I think, that were given the authoritative power to establish doctrine, to heal, to deliver, to chastise (having seen the Lord), and to write the Scriptures that we now hold so dear.

"I'm a bondsman first," sold out. "I am called by the Lord, invited to be an apostle." He then says, in verse 1, "I've been separated to the gospel of God." The word "separated" means to be marked off by boundaries. The Greek word is "*aphorizo*," and it literally means that: to draw a line which pushes you back inside the circle or the box or wherever you were. God marked Paul from the moment he was born. He said that in Galatians 1:15, "From my mother's womb, I was called by the Lord to be a servant. He called me by His grace." When he was converted, in Acts 9, the Lord again called him to be a minister of the gospel. "I want you to take these words to the Gentiles." In Acts 13, when God separated him from the church in Antioch - which he was pastoring with Barnabas - the Lord said, "I've got an eye on you. I'm calling you to do this work." Whenever you read in the Scriptures - and you can read a lot of them: John the Baptist, Jacob, Samuel, Jeremiah.....there are a lot of these guys who, when they get to ministry, they go, "God put His hand on me before I was born." This was just a separation. That's true from you as well. Not only are you invited to come to a place of service, but God has had plans for your life since the moment you were born. He's had His eye on you. And I think that there's nothing wrong with you having a personal view of yourself, an opinion of yourself, a view of who you are and saying to yourself, "God has His eyes on me. God made a choice of me. He's invited me to go somewhere. He has a work that He wants me to do." To be separated for the Lord means to be fully committed to His plans. Christianity separates us not for privilege or glory or pride, but a relationship with God separates you to walk in God's ways. In fact, it seems like, from Paul, the man who is most effective in being separate for the Lord burns every bridge that he has back to the world. There's really no way back. "I'm all in." You know, when Cortez landed on the shores of Mexico, he was a pretty powerful captain, but the first thing he did when their boats landed was he burned every boat. And then he said to his troops, "From now on, victory or death." It's all in. There's no way back. Right? That's what Paul said. "God has separated me, set me apart. This is my calling from my mother's womb, and this is what I'm going to do."

And the gospel, the word means good news, the good news of Jesus, the good news of God, was that He loved us enough to send His Son. There are, I think, nineteen times in the gospel of John - we've been studying that with the men's and women's inductive studies - where Jesus speaks not of coming of Himself but that He was sent by the Father. Nineteen times the Lord said, "I've been sent by My Father." And I think that that's good to keep in mind because all of the bad news you read about sin in Romans - about man and his sinfulness and how the depths of sin can really ruin us - God sent good news for the sinner. And the worse you see yourself, the more glorious God looks. You know? I think when I first got saved, I thought, "All right, I'm saved. This is cool. God's gonna really use me because I've got a lot to offer." And then you live as a Christian for 40-50 years, and you get to see yourself in a way that you go, "I don't know what God's even doing hanging around with me." He looks better; you look worse. And I guess that's sort of the way it works. But salvation, ultimately, was God's idea, and Paul's whole ministry of being an apostle and God's servant was to go into the world and bear witness to the truth that God had come to save sinners. He said that He had given us a ministry of reconciliation, that we're supposed to, he said to the Corinthians (2 Corinthians 5:20), "Go to the world and implore them on God's behalf that they be reconciled to God." "Come on, man, get right with God! Look what He's done!" Paul said, "That's what God has separated me for. So, "I'm a bond servant by choice. I've been invited by God to be an apostle, and I have been set apart by Him. The lines have been drawn around me. I've been boxed in. The boundaries have been set. I'm to go out and share the good news of God."

Verse 2, "which He promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures." Now Paul turns from a personal view of himself to begin to look at his view of what he was preaching. He said, "I've been separated to preach." Okay. To preach what? And he starts with "this promise of God that has been declared through the prophets in the Holy Scriptures." Verse 3 will tell us it is about Jesus, but he starts by saying, "The subject and the focus of my preaching is that the good news of Jesus finds its roots deep in the Old Testament." In other words, the gospel is not a new novelty. It didn't just arise in someone's idea or afterthought of God. It's not a revision by the Lord of plans. It isn't a strategy or somehow a change of ability to bend over time. Many centuries, many prophets - 300 of them, to be specific, as far as prophecies were declared in the Old Testament about the coming Messiah. Paul said, "That's what I've been called to do, to show that Jesus attaches Himself to everything that the Scriptures said, that God indeed planned to send His Son. And it's something that I preach." When Paul was writing 1

Corinthians 15:3-4, he said, "For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures." And he didn't have a New Testament. He was writing the New Testament! Didn't even know it. "He rose on the third day according to the Scriptures." So he was given by the Lord an assurance as he was going out to preach, not only of who he was but what he was to preach, what had to be the subject of his message. So much of the Old Testament reveals the Messiah: where would He be born, to what tribe would He belong, what was His purpose in coming, what would His name be, who would He appear to, how would He die, would He rise. Not to mention that every sacrifice and holy day led directly to Jesus and the work that He would come to do of salvation. If you read the book of Hebrews, which I think makes those great connections - and I personally believe Paul wrote it incognito, just because of his lack of relationship with the Jewish saints, if you will - spends much of the time, like I said, making those connections. It's the best New Testament book for attaching the Old Testament, I think. That and the book of Matthew, probably. So, "What am I preaching? What am I called to? I want to talk to them about the promises that God made through the prophets through the Old Testament.

In particular, those things, verse 3, "concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." So this is Paul's subject matter. The good news is all about Jesus: His birth, His death, His resurrection. In fact, without Jesus all of the Old Testament news is bad news. There is no good news. In fact, if you read through the Scriptures, after Paul gets saved, the first thing you read about Paul in chapter 9:20 of Acts is "he immediately went to the synagogue and preached Christ, that He's the Son of God." It's the first thing he preached. That was the first message out of his mouth. Thirty years later, it's still the message in his mouth. Jesus - people need to know Jesus is God who has come to save and to deliver. So, that was his first message, and it continues to be. Jesus is the name from the Hebrew "*Yeshua*," God is salvation or Savior. "*Christ*" is Greek from the Hebrew "*Mashiach*" or Messiah, if you will, the Anointed One. It speaks of His mission. Right? He came to save. "Lord" is "*Kyrios*" in the New Testament. It speaks of our relationship with Him. So you can have.....let me put it this way. You can believe in Jesus and not be saved. The devil does, and he doesn't repent. Romans 10:9, right? "If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved." There's that attachment always to His death and to His resurrection. If He's not your Savior

and your Lord, if He's not acknowledged by you as the God of your life, you can call yourself whatever you want, but by God's definition, that's not a relationship that He's going to have you dependent upon. So Paul goes on to say it's the Old Testament, the good news of His Son, and then he says two things about Him. He was.....from a physical standpoint and from a lineage standpoint through the Old Testament, we could track Him down for being the descendant of the seed of David according to His flesh. Right? There's this great mystery in the concept of Jesus as the Son of God because in one sense, He is Himself the Lord and God, and yet He is also a Son.

And the question becomes: in what sense is He the Son of God? Well we can trace His humanity through His birth to His mother and to His legal father Joseph, through the prophecies that were given. From the standpoint of who He is, He's the second Person of the Trinity, to bear a human body, to live a sinless life, to substitute for us. But that's a mystery. That's very difficult to wrap your head around, but yet it's part of the gospel, isn't it? You can read it in Romans 5:15-17, about "through one man's offense judgment has come, and condemnation, but through one man's righteous act, all have become.....the free gift of God is the justification for our life." So Jesus, as a Man, according to the flesh - the Greek words that really say the very seed of David - He's fully Man, and then, yet, He's the Son of God. And it's interesting in the Bible. The term "Son of God" is reserved for Jesus at the incarnation. Right? When the Lord takes a flesh, if you will, then He becomes the Son of God. He puts on human flesh, He robes Himself in humanity. He is the dutiful Son to a Father in heaven, and He still is eternally God Himself, let's put it that way, but He's God wrapped in human flesh. And by definition, as the Bible teaches, the Son empties Himself of the independent use of His divine prerogatives to humble Himself to the will of the Father. He becomes our example. Right? He's not less God than ever, but He humbles Himself even unto death itself. "Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You" (John 17:1).

So Paul says, "The message that I am preaching - that I'm called to, that I'm separated for as a bondservant, as an apostle - is to share the promises God made through the prophets about His Son Jesus, who was in the lineage of David, and yet He was declared to us to also be the Son of God, and we see that through the power according to the Spirit, the works of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." So, Jesus was God - declared to be the Son of God with power by the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection. Two things that separate Jesus in the eyes of

the world besides His lineage and that is, when it comes to being the Son of God, He lived a holy life, and He rose from the dead. The word "declared" here is pretty interesting because in Greek it's the word for "horizon." Now you know a horizon is that boundary between heaven and earth where as far as you can look, that's the horizon. So from God's standpoint, and from Paul's standpoint, Jesus' divinity and His humanity find the horizon in His body. There He is, God in the flesh. Right? And His flesh and His holy living, arising from the dead, sets the boundary for separating Him from every other man, if you will. So Paul's outlook on the life was to be God's servant. His calling was to declare to the world what he consistently kept in view, that Jesus was the Son of God, offered by the Father, promised by the prophets, descendant of David, lived a holy life. But He's the God-man, and that was his message. In fact Paul would put those two things together as he wrote, in 2 Timothy 2:8, he said, "Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead according to my gospel." He puts them both together. Here's the flesh and the Spirit, if you will, and that constitutes the gospel.

So he declared by the Spirit of holiness that Jesus' life was different than everyone else's. He was sinless. He never looked with lust in His eyes. He never uttered an unkind word or a hasty untruth. He didn't entertain impure thoughts. He didn't waste time or act selfishly or step out of God's will. He wasn't ever wrong. He spent 12,000 days of His life having victory for us. His holy life and then the death and His resurrection proved His victory over sin. And Paul said, "That's what I'm preaching! No one else has done this. It's the Person of the good news. He's fully God, He's fully Man. In His flesh, He got tired; He had to sleep. And yet, as God, He could stop the storm. At the cross, He bled out. But as God, He offered eternal life. So, even to the thief on the cross." So, Paul's message that he grabbed hold of was: who is Jesus, and why did He come? And that was what he preached for 30+ years. And I think if you go back and read the sermons that are recorded of him, that's exactly what he did. He stays very consistent. So this is all Paul's declaration of himself. "Here's how I view myself. Here's what I have, as far as my preaching is concerned."

Verse 5, "Here's my calling, my commission," and he turns from his message of Jesus to the grace that God saved him and then gave to him so he could minister to others. He writes this in verse 5, "Through Him" (through Jesus, this God-man) "we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations for His name." So, God has saved us and then commissioned us so that by

living obediently to Him, by faith, in front of the nations of the world, they'll get to know who He is. That's Paul's view of his commission. Right? But I want you to notice the order because personal grace has to precede true service. Notice the word "grace" before "apostleship," salvation before ministry. "Come to Me" before "go into all the world." It has to be in that order. And there is always disaster waiting for those who try to use their service to the Lord as a substitute for their relationship with the Lord. And a lot of people try to do that. I've had someone say to me who we.....let's say a musician who wasn't doing very well, we never see him in church. We go, "Dude, you've got to sit down for a while. We never see you around here. What you're doing for the Lord is far less important than what you are to Him. Just go find that love for the Lord again. Then come serve." And they'll say things like this, "If I don't get to play guitar, I'll die." No. But if you keep playing the guitar, you're going to die spiritually. Because there's this substitution for service instead of relationship. Paul said, "From the Lord I got grace, and then I had the apostleship given to me so I could live the life in the eyes of the world." But it is always in that order. And it's important that you see it like that. Ministry should always be overflow. Right? You don't do ministry to maintain your walk with the Lord. You do ministry because your walk with the Lord is fine, and you've got something to offer. You're receiving so you can give out. You're full so you can be poured out. And that's how Paul view himself 30 years later. You know, if you've coached any kind of kids' sports, there's always a player who's pretty lousy, and you have to play 'em but you really don't want to, so you wait till there's no jeopardy of them wrecking anything. Then, "You go in there, buddy, and do good." You know? The B-Team. There's no B-Team with God at all. That doesn't even compute. His grace saves me, His grace then calls me, and my walk with Him obediently before the nations causes people to come to Him.

There's a great story that Moody tells of a man who came up to him after one of his messages, and he said to him, "Sir, I counted eleven grammatical errors in your sermon this morning." And Moody said, "Yes, sir, I had a very poor education, but I'm using all I can to know Him. Are you?" And then he told the story of a fellow who complained about the way he was doing altar calls, and Moody said, "Yes, I am very uncomfortable with altar calls. I wish I had a better way than that." And he said to the complainer, "What method are you using to call people to Jesus?" And the fellow said, "Well, I really don't have one," and Moody said, "Well, then I like mine better." (Laughing)

So, our best is good enough when we first stand in God's grace. But that's all we need, really. You don't need to be anything special. You just need to stand in His grace. And if we're standing in His grace, then we can have a calling, a commission. But notice how it works out if we stand in God's grace. The attitude is of obedience, the assignment is to live out your faith where others can see you, and the authority that you have is in His name. That's what it says here. So Paul, in particular, was sent by the Lord as an apostle to the *Gentiles*, which he mentions here to assure them that God's heart was also thinking about the Romans. And understand that from a Jewish mindset, not every Jewish Christian was ready to embrace the *Gentile* believer, but Paul was. So, our salvation is best seen by the lost through our obedience to the Lord, where He is our Lord.

There are many names for the Lord in the Old and New Testaments, but the most common one is "Lord," which is "*Adonai*" in the Old Testament, "*Kyrios*" in the New Testament. It just means.....it's a word of relationship, of place, I guess, position. Right? He's in charge, you're not. I just want Him to be the Lord.

So, Paul viewed his salvation and his calling as God's favor and His work, and he's carrying it out, and he was ready to do so.

Finally he mentions, in verses 6 and 7, his view of the people that he's writing to, though he had never met them. He said of them, "among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ; to all who are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints; grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." It's an awesome view that Paul had of the church, most of whom.....well, just take the names out of Romans 16, and that's pretty much.....I think he said 'hi' to everybody he knew. But amongst the nation to whom he was sent to preach, he saw the church in Rome - that he had never met - as the invited folks of God. It's that same word again, "invited." Right? Invited by God to Jesus. Invited by the Lord to live obediently in the eyes of the nations so they too, like Paul, could be a good witness to Him and for Him in the eyes of the world. They were in Rome. You're in Whittier. Same commission. Go live your faith out in the eyes of the world so they might become convinced of who God is. Paul saw this church that he had never met as God's chosen people, His people called to various ministries. Paul was called to be an apostle, but they were all called to be a light for the Lord, if you will. You're called to Jesus, "to all who are in Rome."

Then he says, in verse 7, "You're beloved of God." God loves you. We should get used to that but never get over that. God loves the whole world, but the saints are His favorite. Convinced of that. You should love your neighbor, but you better have your wife and your children as their beloved. It's a different issue. God always calls the saints His beloved. He loves the world, but you're beloved. Right? To you, He can express His love. "For God" (the greatest Lover) "so loved" (to the greatest degree) "the world" (the greatest company) "that He might give" (the greatest act) "His only begotten Son" (the greatest gift), "that whosoever" (the greatest opportunity) "believes" (the greatest simplicity) "in Him" (the greatest attraction) "shouldn't perish" (the greatest promise) "but" (the greatest difference) "have" (the greatest certainty) "everlasting life" (the greatest possession). You are beloved of God. He calls them saints. It's just another word for separate, "*hagios*." The root word is for holy. The church is called the "*ekklesia*." It's the called-out ones. God calls them out of the world. They're comprised of the holy ones. Right?

And then he gives them just this blessing, and you find it in a lot of the books of the Scriptures, these Siamese twins of the New Testament coupled together: grace and peace. Always, by the way, in that order again. You must first experience the grace of God, then, as His people, you can experience the peace of God. But until then, you can't. Right? You have to find God's forgiveness and mercy, and then you can rest. You have His peace with God, and then you have the peace of God.

And so Paul very clearly just lays out, even in these first seven verses, "This is who I am. This is why I'm here. This is why God has worked in me." And he starts by speaking of himself. He's saying, "I've chosen to be God's slave, His servant. God has appointed me, invited me to be an apostle. God has marked out the boundaries of my life so that I serve Him with all that I can in this calling. As far as my preaching, I just want to preach what the prophets have been speaking about for generations: this coming Savior, this good news about the Son, Jesus Christ, born of the seed of David, proven out to be God through His holy life, by the holiness of the Spirit and the resurrection that nobody's going to be able to replicate. And Jesus, the God-man, is the horizon, the dividing line between heaven and earth." Right? You see them both in Him. That's where it kind of fades together. As far as his commission is, Paul saw his calling as first salvation and then a walk that people could see. First salvation, first grace, and then fruitfulness. But not the other way around. He saw the church as God's beloved people that He had chosen,

and he wanted to get there to show them who the Lord was and just to lay out for them what God had done in the lives of so many other Gentiles. And he'd finally be given the chance. But, next week, his desire to see Rome.

So we're going to look at verses 8-17 next week. Still going to be easy. Not much to think about. But then, uh oh, we'll have to get to work. (Laughing) All right?

Submitted by Maureen Dickson
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