



SCRIPTURE STUDIES: ROMANS 1:1-7

Brandon Sutton, Associate Pastor of The Journey Church in Lebanon, TN

Romans 1:1-7 (ESV) – Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scripture, concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations, including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ, to all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

One of my favorite figures in church history is Martyn Lloyd Jones. Lloyd Jones was born in Wales on December 20, 1899. He moved to London with his family when he was 14 and went to Medical School at St. Bartholomew's (teaching) Hospital where he received his M.D. in 1921 and became Sir Thomas Horder's chief clinical assistant. Horder described Lloyd-Jones as "the most acute thinker that I ever knew" Sometime between 1921 and 1923, MLJ was converted powerfully after sitting under strong gospel preaching. This changed everything for him. While continuing to practice medicine, at least two things bothered him.

- 1) The idea that if man had enough money, good enough jobs, education, reasonable living conditions, he would be morally upright and a good citizen was proven wrong repeatedly before MLJ's eyes. He observed the poorest in London and the most educated and wealthy (people who visited the King's physician) were just as ungodly.
- 2) He was treating people physically only to see them go on living a life of sin and spiritual destruction.

He knew man's problem was moral and spiritual. He also knew that traditional religion couldn't solve their problems. Men needed the transforming power of the gospel. So, Jones left medicine and became a pastor at a poor church. He spent the rest of his life preaching the gospel. When he got to his church, he removed all the programs. He said, they were going to have a Sunday morning service. Sunday night. A prayer service and Friday theology night. Everything else had to go. It was all about the gospel. I bring this up because MLJ was a man who knew his calling. He knew the power of the gospel, and he knew what his purpose was. Paul was the same way.

Scriptural Context

This is a typical Hellenistic (Greek style) letter. It has a greeting, a body and conclusion. The beginning has the name of the writer (at the beginning, not the end like modern letters), the recipients, and a greeting. Paul used his greetings/opening of the letters to communicate his gospel. As I mentioned in the beginning, in this introduction, Paul tells us about his calling, his message and his ministry. Those are the three points I want to look at with you.

Point #1-Paul's Calling

Romans 1:1 (ESV) -- Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God

We talked about Paul's background last week. So, we won't go back into his history. Rather, we are going to let the apostle tell us about himself from this opening. There are three things Paul tells us about himself.

1. A servant
2. An apostle
3. Set apart

#1-A Servant of Christ Jesus

- A Slave. Before Paul mentions his apostolic authority, he makes it clear that his authority is derived from another source—Christ. Paul is not his own. He is a slave to Christ. The best translation of the word "servant" is slave. It is the Greek word *Doulos*, not *diakonos* (which is often translated as servant, deacon). It denotes subservience to a Lord or Master. It could refer to those who served voluntarily, but in most cases, it refers to someone who was in permanent bondage and will not see release but through death. In the Roman Empire,

there were millions of slaves, and they were treated as animals or property in many cases.

- **But Paul loved serving Christ.** In the OT, an indentured servant could stay with his master if he loved him. This is Paul's attitude about Christ. He is a slave who never wants to leave.
- **Application.** All Christians are slaves to Christ. You are either a slave to sin or to Jesus. If you're a Christian, Jesus purchased you with His blood. He owns you. You are His by virtue of creation and redemption. **"You are not your own. For you were bought at a price"** (1 Cor. 6:19).
- **Sproul quote.** "There is also irony here: when Christ sets us free from slavery to the flesh, he calls us to the royal liberty of slavery to him. That is why we call him Master. We acknowledge that it is from him that we get our marching orders. He is the Lord of our lives. We are not our own. We are not autonomous or independent. Unless people understand their relationship to Christ in these terms, they remain unconverted."

#2-Called to be an Apostle

- **What is an apostle?** The term means one who is sent. When Jesus conducted His earthly ministry, he had many disciples (upwards to 70 at one time), but He only chose 12 apostles (the terms disciple and apostle are not interchangeable). All Christians are disciples (learners of Christ), but only a few were designated to be an apostle.
- **What makes an apostle unique?** To be an apostle meant you had unique authority to speak on behalf and with the authority of God. Speaking to His apostles, Jesus said, **"He who hears you hears Me, he who rejects you rejects Me, and he who rejects Me rejects Him who sent Me"** (Luke 10:16). Apostles had the miraculous gifts of the Spirit to verify the message of the gospel (Matt. 10:1, 2 Cor. 12:12). Their teachings were the foundation of the church (Eph. 2:20).
- **Jesus or Paul?** So, when some people say, I listen to Jesus not Paul, they are being foolish. The words of Paul are the words of Jesus. The words in red have no more authority than the words of Paul because it is all the word of God.
- **Are there still Apostles today?** No. All 13 (12 plus Paul) apostles have died and there can be no more. Why? To be an apostle, you had to be appointed by Jesus (you couldn't volunteer or be voted in by your peers; see Gal. 1:1), see the risen Christ, and walk with Him during His ministry. Paul saw the risen Christ and was appointed to His service. Paul had private training from Jesus Himself (Gal

1:11), and his gospel was confirmed by the current leaders of the church (Gal. 2:9).

- **Paul's distinct authority.** Paul wants the church to understand that he has apostolic authority to preach the gospel. He does not list a co-sender like Timothy, as he does in other letters (1 Cor. 1:1, Gal. 1:1 etc.), because he wants the church to recognize his distinct authority.
- **Beware of false teachers.** Though there are no apostles today, one still must be called of God to preach God's message. Even so, the called man must preach God's message! His teachings must come from the word of God. Richard Baxter, in the Reformed Pastor, said that God's messengers today must be 1) Redeemed 2) Called.

#3-Set apart for the Gospel of God

- **Set apart for the gospel.** Paul was not only a slave and apostle, but he had also been specifically set apart to preach the gospel (even from his mother's womb; Gal. 1:15).
- **Set apart believers.** Every Christian is set apart for the gospel of God. This is our purpose/mission. To be set apart means to be sanctified or made holy for the Lord. In the OT, it referred to God setting apart the Levites, the firstborn, and Israel itself as holy to the Lord. When you serve the lord, you are a holy vessel unto God.
- **Defining the gospel.** It's the term evangelion. It means good news. It was often used in reference to the emperor, who was venerated and worship. "Good news, the Emperor has taken the throne or had a son or good news...." fill in the blank. Paul's message was, good news, God forgives rebels.
- **NT/Pauline Usage of Evangelion.** The term evangelion is used 76 times in the NT. Jesus often spoke of the Gospel of the Kingdom. Mark spoke of the gospel of Jesus Himself. In Acts, Luke calls it the gospel of the grace of God. Paul's usage of the term is as follows (Romans 1:1, 9, 16, 2:16, 10:16, 1 Cor. 15:1). Summarize the gospel.
- **Gospel of God.** This is a phrase noting possession. This is not just the gospel about God. This is God's gospel. He owns it. He thought it up in eternity. Before anything came to be, God eternally designed the plan of redemption. Jesus is the lamb who was slain before the foundation of the world. Therefore, we don't alter the gospel. The gospel does not belong to us. We are stewards of the gospel. We have been entrusted with the message, and our job is to preach it purely.

Point #2-Paul's Gospel

Romans 1:2-4 (ESV)

(2) --which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures,

- **OT vs NT.** We often think that the OT is the law, and the NT is grace. But the truth is, there is law and grace in both. And, the NT is the fulfillment of the OT.
- **Which He Promised.** "which" refers to the term gospel. God promised the gospel before the time of Paul's writings in the preaching and writing of the prophets in the holy Scriptures, the OT. (c.f. 3:21). Paul's gospel was established on the OT (3:31, 8:4). Christianity is not a new, distinct religion from Judaism. It is the fulfillment of Judaism.
- **Which prophets?** All of them. The gospel was first announced in the Garden (Genesis 3:15). God then said He would bless the whole world through Abraham's seed (Gen. 12). Isaiah frequently spoke of the good news (40:9, 52:7, 60:6, 61:1). God has been promising the gospel from the beginning. Jesus said He was the fulfillment of the Scriptures (Luke 24:27).
- **God is Faithful.** This highlights the faithfulness of God. He is a God who keeps His promises.

(3) -- concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh

- **The gospel concerning Jesus.** This is the gospel concerning His Son. The gospel that is from God is about Jesus Christ, His Son. This is the gospel of God's Son.
- **God's Son.** To call Jesus the Son of God is to say, He is God's equal and thus preexistent (8:3). In other words, Jesus has always been the Son, even before His resurrection and declaration to be the Son (c.f. V.4).
- **Descended from David.** Jesus is the offspring of King David, and He is the fulfillment of the Davidic Kingly promises (2nd Sam. 7). Jesus is Israel's promised King and Messiah. Early on, Paul is showing Jesus' Jewish roots and that He not only fulfills the promises of the prophets but the covenants as well.
- **God man.** The One who is the eternal Son of God is also the One who descended from David according to the flesh (That is, according to His humanity. Sometimes, flesh can refer to sinful flesh, but here it obviously means humanity since Jesus never sinned). In this one short verse, Paul shows Jesus to be the God man. He is God's Son. And He's David's offspring. Jesus is human and divine (Psalm 110).

- **Schreiner Quote.** Schreiner says, *“We do not have the precision here of the later Christological formulas in the history of the church, but verses like these were the raw materials from which later Christology was developed.”*

(4) -- and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord,

- **Declared to be the Son of God: Two Explanations.**
 - 1) Jesus was not made the Son of God after His resurrection or because His of His resurrection. Jesus’ resurrection showed His Sonship. It proved His Sonship. It revealed His Sonship. The resurrection was God’s way to demonstrate to the whole world that Jesus is the Son of God.
 - 2) The word “declared” (Greek, Horizo) consistently means appoint or determine or fix (Luke 22:22, Acts 22:3, 10:42, 11:29, 17:26, 31, Heb. 4:7). The idea is that Jesus was appointed to be the Son of God by His resurrection. He was exalted to a state He did not previous have. This is not to say that Jesus was adopted as God’s Son or that He hasn’t always been God’s divine Son. He wasn’t made divine. But it is to say that as a reward for Jesus’ work, God appointed Him to this exalted status at His right hand. God made Him both Lord and Christ (Acts 2:36, Acts 13:33, Ps.2:7, Hebrew 1:5).
- **Resurrection Proof.** The resurrection of Jesus Christ is proof that Jesus is God’s Son (Lee Strobel).
- **The Spirit of Holiness.** His resurrection was according to the Spirit of holiness. This means His resurrection was accomplished by the Spirit. The resurrection is a work of the Triune God. All three members of the trinity are given credit for the resurrection in Scripture.

Point #3-Paul’s Mission

Romans 1:5-7 (ESV)

(5) -- through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations,

- **Through whom.** Jesus Christ is the preposition of the object whom. Paul received apostleship and grace through Jesus Christ.
- **We have received.** Some say, Paul is speaking in the plural here as references the other apostles who share his mission and authority. Others say, he is speaking only of himself.

- **Received grace and apostleship.** The two terms should not be separated here. Calvin says Paul received the “gracious apostolate). Paul’s conversion is directly connected to his office as an apostle, both were by God’s grace.
- **Obedience of faith.** Paul’s mission was to bring people to faith in Jesus. Faith in Jesus is obedience to Jesus because all men are commanded to believe. This is not to say, we’re saved by works. If faith is a work (as some might argue from John 6), it is a work accomplished by God (not man) because both repentance and faith are gifts of God. But it’s undeniable that believing in Jesus is obedience unto God (c.f. 10:16). Unbelief is disobedience. Also, obedience flows from faith.
- **For the sake of His name.** The ultimate purpose of gospel ministry is not the conversion and salvation of sinners. It’s the glory of God. We preach Christ for the sake of His name (character and being of a person). That’s why when we go to jail, for example, and no one responds to the preaching of the gospel, it is still a success because we proclaimed Christ for His glory.
- **Among all the nations.** The inclusion of all nations is an anticipated theme in Romans (3:22, 31, 10:11-13).
- **Apostle to the Gentiles.** The unique nature of Paul’s apostolic office was that he was an apostle to the gentiles. But that doesn’t mean he didn’t minister to Jews. Paul had a burning heart for the Jews’ salvation (10:1-2) and often reasoned with them. Paul was a gospel minister to all people. His calling was for the purpose of bringing obedience to all the nations.

(6) -- including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ,

- **Explanation.** Paul says, my mission is to bring the nations to the obedience of faith, including you (the Roman Church) who are called to belong to Jesus Christ. This most likely indicates that the church is predominantly Gentile (historical discussion, 1:13). Nevertheless, the letter is to “all those in Rome” (V.7), which obviously included many Jews as well.
- **Called to Jesus.** The word called is the same word Paul used to describe his calling as an apostle (V.1). Here it means the effective call that accompanies the preaching of the gospel. All men are called to believe (Acts 17:30), but only God’s elect are called to belong to Jesus Christ by the by power of the Holy Spirit.

(7) -- To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

- **Loved by God.** Just as Israel was deemed God's beloved, now the church, those who belong to Jesus Christ, the true Israel, are now God's beloved children.
- **Called to be Saints.** Our calling is to be a saint. Some people feel called to a vocation or place to go. Christians are called (ordained by God) to be a saint. Do you feel like a saint? Are you there yet? The truth is, in Christ you are a Saint.
- **Roman Catholic view of Saints.** Only the super Christians are saints in RC, but the Bible says all those in Christ Jesus are Saints of God.
- **Grace and peace.** This signified a holistic sense of well-being and being in the favor of God. And this grace and peace comes directly from the Father and the Son. Every day, Christians live in the grace of God.