

ROAMING THROUGH ROMANS

“Set Apart”

Romans 1:1-7

Open your Bibles to Romans Chapter One. We are going to look at the first seven verses. Let's read our text, and then we'll take a look at it verse by verse. Romans 1:1-7:

¹Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called *to be* an apostle, separated to the Gospel of God ²which He promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures, ³concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, ⁴and declared *to be* the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead. ⁵Through Him we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations for His name, ⁶among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ;

⁷To 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.

Last time in our first session we were introduced to our author, Paul. He was named Saul by his parents most likely after the first king of Israel. But then he met Jesus on the road to Damascus where he was headed to persecute followers of “the Way.” We don't know for sure if this was when his name was changed to Paul. But it was during this encounter with the Lord that Saul realized who he was in relation to his God. It was at this time that he became a *doulos*, a bond slave of Jesus Christ. Remember, we learned that in Greek Paul means “little.” And for me this brings to mind what Jesus said to the church at Philadelphia in Revelation Chapter 3.

He said they had “*little strength*” (Revelation 3:8). In God's economy, that is a good place to be. Sometime after his Damascus Road experience, Paul would write this about a thorn in the flesh he had been given (2 Corinthians 12:8-10):

⁸Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. ⁹And He said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. ¹⁰Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in

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reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

Why would Paul boast in his infirmities, his troubles?

Because he knew Jesus was right there with him. When he felt weak, Jesus gave him strength. He had learned that he could not do the things God wanted him to do by himself (John 15:5). He needed grace for strength, grace to endure, grace to live life — *grace, grace, more grace*. God gives grace to the humble but resists the proud, right!

You see, before he met Jesus, Paul was a prideful man. He was, by his own admission, a Pharisee of Pharisees (Acts 23:6). Listen to how Paul described his former self (Philippians 3:4-6):

⁴though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: ⁵circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; ⁶concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.

The whole idea of this sect of Judaism, the Pharisees, was that they were “separated.” That is what the root word for Pharisee actually means, “separated ones.” They prided themselves on being set apart from everyone and everything else. So much so that they would walk through the streets of Jerusalem with their robes tied tightly around them. They didn’t want their garments to brush against one of the Gentiles, because that would make them unclean. No Gentile cooties were to get on them!

And Paul was so devoted to this “religion” that he couldn’t understand why a Jew would follow “the Way.” So he vowed to destroy them.

But, on the road to Damascus, Paul experiences a different kind of separation — one that changes his life dramatically. He meets the very LORD that he is persecuting and gets taken down to his knees. Paul is broken and does what we all should do when we come to the Lord. He asks Him, “What can I do for You?” Then, a few days later, a man named Ananias comes and gives Paul his answer. He was to become an apostle, *a sent out one*, to the Gentiles.

Can you imagine how that must have blown this Pharisee away?

Not only was he supposed to stop persecuting the Way, he was also being sent to the unwashed masses. But it was really no problem at all. You see, as he stared up at Jesus, he realized that he was “little.” And the very least he could do for this Big Master he was

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now going to follow was anything he was set apart to do. That is where we begin our study this morning.

Look what Paul was set apart for (verses 1):

Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called *to be* an apostle, separated to the Gospel of God

Paul, the slave of Jesus, the apostle, was no longer a Pharisee. He was no longer separated from others by his religion. He was separated to the Gospel of God.

Now we all know what Gospel means. Good News. And the people of Paul's time would have been very familiar with this term. Quite often a herald or messenger would cry out in the town square good news about the empire. But this wasn't just any good news. It was the Gospel of God.

Jon Courson, in his commentary on Romans, said this about the Gospel Paul preached:

The Greek word translated "Gospel" is ...[where] we get our word 'evangelist.' In the Septuagint, this was the word used when the people of Israel were released from their Babylonian captivity. It meant, 'You can go home. You're free. Good news!' Truly, the Gospel is Good News—not just good advice. A lot of preachers, authors, and speakers try to make Christianity a bunch of good advice. Most best-selling Christian books today are full of good advice about child-rearing, financial planning, or marriage counseling. ...Paul wasn't separated unto the good advice of Christian living. He was separated to the Good News of God."

So what is it that sets this Good News apart from good advice? Look at verse 2:

which He promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures,

The Good News of God is the promise that He made through His prophets in the Scriptures. So this is not a “new” Gospel. It is what God has told us in His Word all along — since the fall of man.

That is why Peter, on the day of Pentecost, as all these people are coming to Christ, said this to the Jewish leaders. They had asked him what this was all about. This was his answer (Acts 2:14-16):

¹⁴“Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and heed my words. ¹⁵For these are not drunk, as you

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suppose, since it is *only* the third hour of the day. ¹⁶But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

First Peter quoted to them from the prophet, and then he shared Jesus with them from the Old Testament. Jesus did the same thing on the road to Emmaus. He met a couple of the disciples who left Jerusalem because He had been crucified. Then He shared from the Scriptures all that was written about Him.

Could you do that — share Jesus with someone from the Old Testament?

You see, folks, the Gospel is not some clever invention of man. Peter said that he and the other disciples did not follow “cunningly devised fables” (2 Peter 1:16). He and his friends actually walked, slept and ate with Jesus. They were there when He was crucified and saw the place where He was buried. But more importantly than that, in the next few weeks, they saw that He was risen. So Peter was not just telling them some story he heard. He was sharing with his readers the power of the resurrection. And he could because he was a witness of the “majesty” of Jesus Christ. Paul saw that as well on the road to Damascus. He saw the *RISEN* Lord.

So God’s Gospel is not about some precept or principle. It is about a Person. It is all about Jesus. It is the Good News of what God the Father did by sending His Son into the world to save us. Look at verses 3-4:

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

Do you see the picture of Jesus the God/Man here?

Jesus is both the “Seed” of David and the “Son of God.”

How does that work?

As the offspring of David, He was born to the Virgin Mary. But He is also the Son of God by the power (*dunamis* from which we get the word *dynamite*) of the Holy Spirit. Verse 3 speaks of His perfect humanity. And verse 4, His perfect deity.

Jesus was not a divine man or a human god. He was and He is God incarnate — God come in human flesh (John 1:14).

So the Good News is not about a good man. It is about the **God man**.

So many in our time say that Jesus was a “good teacher,” a “spiritual leader,” or a “great man.” But this cannot be true.

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Jesus said that He was the only way to come to the Father. It was only through Him that one can be saved.

A good man would never say this. No, Jesus was the God man — a whole different level.

Notice as well that Paul says the Jesus was “declared” to be the Son of God. We get our word *horizon* from this Greek word. The horizon is the line that determines the farthest visible part of the earth in reference to the heavens. So when this declaration was made, it was like God bringing heaven and earth together.

Jesus was sent to reconcile man’s relationship with a Heavenly Father. He was to pave the way for man to have an everlasting, eternal relationship with God.

Who made this declaration?

The Holy Spirit. Paul here calls Him the “Spirit of Holiness.” And I think that is significant.

Jesus was empowered by the Holy Spirit to live a perfect, sinless life here on earth. That is so important because, in order to be a perfect sacrifice unto the Father, He had to be perfect — without blemish. But He had to do this as a man, in the flesh. That way He could know all that we go through yet live without sin. By the way, that power is available to us as well. We will learn more about that as we delve deeper into Romans.

So, how do we know that what Jesus did was an acceptable sacrifice?

Because He was declared to be by the “resurrection from the dead.”

Jesus is alive!

This cannot be said about any other former “religious” leader. You can visit the tombs of Mohammed, Buddha and all the other religious leaders from history.

But the tomb of Jesus is empty.

Jesus died on the cross as a perfect sacrifice. The Father accepted this sacrifice and certified it by raising Him from the dead, opening the gates of heaven.

This proves that Jesus defeated sin and death. And what He did nullified the penalty for sin, the wages, if you will, for all those who would trust in Him.

So, is it important that we believe Jesus was fully God and fully man?

It is not just important. It is imperative. Our entire salvation depends on us being “in Christ.”

Why?

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Because it is through the lens of what Jesus did for us that the Father sees us.

If Jesus is not fully God, then His righteousness is not perfect. He would not have been able to satisfy the penalty for sin and thus God could not have saved you.

If Jesus is not fully man, then He could not die in your place.

What did Jesus say is greater love?

To die for your friends.

So if Jesus was not fully man, His righteousness is not available to you since He is not like you. Thus God could not have saved you.

Once again, the Gospel is about a Person, not a precept. It is all about Jesus and what He did for you and for me.

And not only did His perfect sacrifice pay the price for your salvation. It also should change your life, just like it did Paul's. Look what he writes next (verse 5):

Through Him we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations for His name,

This Gospel that Paul is bringing impacts individual lives. It isn't an interesting theory or philosophy. It is life-changing Good News.

Why is that?

Because it comes *through Him*. It comes through Jesus.

Paul gives us two aspects of our salvation here. First, *through Jesus* we have received grace. We all know that grace is unmerited favor. By grace we receive what we don't deserve. We deserve death — the wages of sin is death. But God gives us life. The gift of God is eternal life and it is found in only one place — in Jesus. That is grace.

But not only that, we also receive apostleship. That means we are all “sent out.” We all have a mission. And that mission is to be obedient to *the faith*, which is Christianity.

What does that obedience entail?

What are we set apart to do?

Take the Good News to all the nations. We are given grace to be sent out and share the Good News with the entire world.

So, this Good News isn't just local news. It is breaking news — worldwide news. It is for all people. *Through Jesus* we have been given everything we need to tell everyone everywhere about what He has done. And I think this is important to understand.

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There are some in the world who think, because we send missionaries to all parts of the world, we are trying to force our culture on them. But Christianity is not a Western religion. It originated in the Middle East town of Jerusalem in the Middle East nation of Israel. That makes us as far away from its origin as you can get. But, it is not a Middle Eastern religion either. In fact, it is not a religion at all.

Jesus sent out His disciples into all the world, not to share rules and regulations for being a good person. He did not tell them to give some formula on how to reach out to God. He sent them to share the Good News. He commissioned them to share Him, *to share Jesus*, with the least, last and lost of the world.

Why?

Because He wants to have a personal relationship with them just as He does with us. And only He has the grace they need to come to know God.

For God so loved the world that what?

He sent Jesus to die for us.

There is no *do this* or *don't do that* in this message. There is only *DONE!*

And I have to admit that this troubled me at first. I believed that there was a God who created the world. Just look around, and you should be able to see that. There had to be something out there that created all this.

But why did I need a Savior?

Why couldn't I come to God on my own, by my own efforts?

I went to "Happy Church" for months struggling with this. Then I read Ephesians 2:8-9. We all know what that says, right:

⁸For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, ⁹not of works, lest anyone should boast.

Before we get to the grace part of this verse, I want to look at something important.

It is by grace, but through what is one saved?

Through faith.

In order to receive grace, you must first trust, by faith, in the work that Jesus did on the cross. You have to believe in your heart that Jesus lived, died and rose again that you might have life everlasting.

You see, many people *believe* in Jesus.

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But are they born again?

Have they placed their trust in Him?

Do they not only believe (by the way, the demons believe and they tremble), but do they trust that what He did was efficacious?

In other words, do they believe that His sacrifice was enough and that it was for them?

Because, if you don't, you will almost certainly fall back under the law.

The most freeing moment of my life came when I realized Jesus had done everything I needed to have everlasting life. All I had to do was trust that He did it *for me*. And, by the way, He did it for you, too. Once you come to this faith, nothing can separate you from it. By grace, through faith, you HAVE been saved. Not will be, or might be. Not if you also do this, you can make it more sure. You HAVE BEEN saved — not of good works because, my friend, if it was, you would boast.

I got this humorous story from JD Faraq's sermon notes on Romans 1:

After twenty years of shaving himself every morning, a man in a small Southern town decided he had enough. He told his wife that he intended to let the local barber shave him each day. He put on his hat and coat and went to the barber shop, which was owned by the pastor of the town's only church. The barber's wife, Grace, was working that day, so she performed the task. Grace shaved him and sprayed him with lilac water, and sent him on his way. The next morning the man looked in the mirror, and his face was as smooth as it had been when he left the barber shop the day before. Not bad, he thought. At least I don't need to get a shave every day. The next morning, the man's face was still smooth. Two weeks later, the man was still unable to find any trace of whiskers on his face. It was more than he could take, so he returned to the barber shop. He told the barber's wife how that after two weeks his whiskers still haven't started to grow back. The expression on her face didn't even change, expecting his comment. She responded, "You were shaved by Grace. Once shaved, always shaved."

One commentator very beautifully said this about Romans, "God's grace is all over the place."

In chapters 1-4 we will learn about coming under grace.

Chapters 5-8 teach us how to live under grace.

Chapters 9-11 show us the overflow of grace.

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And, chapters 12-16 teach us that the church is changed by grace.

So we have plenty to learn about it.

But I said earlier that a relationship with Jesus will change your life. And I don't want to leave us hanging.

Paul says that *through Jesus* we have received grace for “obedience to the faith.” With grace I can now understand how and why to be obedient. And it is not by trying in my best efforts to do this or not do that. *My obedience to God is now based on what I don't deserve, and not on what my disobedience does deserve.*

But how does that work?

When one has experienced God's grace, *His unmerited favor*, it becomes more difficult to sin against Him. You no longer look to please God in order to obtain favor. You serve Him as His *doulos*, out of love for what He has done for you.

With “works,” when I mess up, I deserve the hammer to come down. But with grace, when I mess up, more grace comes down. God gives us grace to overcome whatever it was that we did. That is why later in the Book of Romans, Paul is going to say this:

Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more,

What would you rather have, the hammer or abounding grace?

And this isn't just a theory; it is reality. In fact, I would go so far as to say that grace doesn't just change us, it spoils us. It makes it much more difficult to hurt God — or, at least, it should.

Isn't the Gospel the best news you have ever heard?

If not, there is a problem.

What Jesus wants from you is not a weekend thing or a religious thing. It is not a cultural thing. It is a highly personal thing. He doesn't want some of you. He wants all of you. Look at verse 6:

among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ;

In various places in the New Testament Jesus called some men — we know them as the apostles — to be set apart for Him. He called them out of the world, literally separated them from their old lives, and placed them in His service. And, according to Acts Chapter 17, these men “turned the world upside down.”

Here, Paul says, that just like him, we are also called of Jesus Christ.

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After what we have read so far, do you think our calling is any less relevant than his was?

No.

So the important thing for us is to find out what we are called to do and then walk in the good works Jesus prepared for us.

Isn't that simple?

I wish.

As we are going to learn later in our study, there are forces that are working against us to keep up from doing this. The world, our flesh and the enemy of our souls (the unholy trinity) are all trying to stop us from being all that Jesus wants us to be. That is why we need God's grace.

Just like we learned about Paul and his infirmities, when we face trouble Jesus is there with us. We don't have to face it alone. Jesus, by the power of the Holy Spirit, will give us what we need to be victorious. And if we rely on Him, we can be like the apostles of the first century. We may not turn the world upside down. But I think we can make a wonderful difference in our community.

Look who we are in Christ Jesus (verse 7):

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.

Paul's first address to these people in Rome is to let them know they are "beloved of God." God loves the world. But only BE-lievers are BE-loved. That is because we BE-lieve in His only BE-gotten Son. Matthew 3:17 helps us understand this:

And suddenly a voice *came* from heaven, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

Because we are *in Christ* who is God's "beloved Son," we are beloved. When we are justified by faith, God loves us just as He loves Jesus. And this is an incredible thing.

Because of the grace of God in saving us, we now have peace with God. We are no longer at war with Him. Now we can experience the peace of God that surpasses understanding (Philippians 4:7). But not only that.

You are also called to be a "saint." Or, actually, you are called a saint.

Did you notice that the words "*to be*" are italicized?

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The translators did this to give what they thought was a better meaning. But I think they actually obscured the meaning. It is not that one day we might become saints by doing good deeds for Christ. That is what some of the liturgical churches believe — but it is not true. Just like we are “beloved of God,” so we are “saints,” or “Holy Ones.” We have been set apart for Jesus to do the good works He prepared for us BE-forehand.

Isn't that great news?

Isn't it wonderful to know that God is knowable, and He is there for us?

He wants us to *know Him* so that we can *make Him known*.

Does it free you up to understand that all the work of salvation was accomplished on the cross?

So all you have to do is love and serve your Lord.

Isn't this the best news you have ever heard?

Next time we are going to look at how our “serve” is in verses 8-15. Then, after that, we are going to look at the theme of Paul's book in verses 16-17.

Did you know that Romans isn't the only place where we learn that the “just shall live by faith”?

There are actually four books of the Bible where we learn this. Study ahead and see if you can find them.

Let's pray.