

The Called – Romans 1:1-7

I. INTRODUCTION

A. A Different Plan

1. For nearly 25 years we've followed a simple plan for teaching the Word here at CCO.
 - a. On Wednesday we cover from 1 to 2 or more chapters, verse by verse.
 - b. Then on Sunday morning we take a closer look at just a few verses in that same passage but go a lot more in depth.
2. Using this method of both survey Bible study & sermons, we alternate going thru 2 OT books, then 1 NT book.
3. This Wednesday, we'll finish our study thru Acts. The following week we'll dive in to 1 Kings.
4. But *today* marks a **change** in the pattern of study we've followed for the past 2½ decades.
5. Today, we're going to begin the Book of Romans.
 - a. **Instead of sermons** drawn from 1 Kings,
 - b. We're going to work our way thru **Romans, verse by verse**.

B. Romans Background

1. I'm not going to spend a lot of time giving the background of Paul's Letter to the Church at Rome other than to say that it was written at Corinth at the conclusion of his 3rd missionary journey.
2. He'd spent 3 months in Corinth & was wrapping things up as he prepared to head back to Jerusalem with relief for the needy believers there. [Acts 20:3 & Romans 15]
3. It was his hope once he'd visited Jerusalem to make his way to Rome, spend some time with them, then continue on to Spain, the western frontier of the Roman World. [Romans 15]
4. So he sent this letter on ahead so they'd hear ahead of time what he intended to share with them when he got there.
 - a. You see, the church at Rome which was large & well known, had no apostolic connection.
 - b. None of the official leaders of the church in Jerusalem had ever been to Rome to plant the work there.
 - c. The church in Rome had come into existence simply because as the center of the Empire many Jews lived there.
 - 1) No doubt some of them had been in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost when Peter preached his first sermon & had been part of the 3,000 who came to faith in Christ. When they returned home, they carried the faith with them.
 - 2) Others who were won to faith in various places around the Mediterranean also carried the Gospel to Rome.
 - 3) As the saying goes, "All roads lead to Rome" so it was inevitable Christianity would take root there.
5. Realizing the strategic importance of Rome, Paul sent this letter to them –
 - a. It contains a **systematic explanation** of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
 - b. Paul had been teaching & preaching for over 20 years.
 - c. What we read in Romans is in all likelihood a full text version of what he taught when he came to a new city & went to the synagogue.

II. TEXT

A. V. 1

Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ,

1. *Our* custom in writing a letter *today* is to put our name at the *end*.

In many of D.L. Moody's evangelistic meetings, he faced hecklers who tried to disrupt his meetings. He had an amazing talent for turning their insults to his advantage.

In the final service of one campaign, an usher handed him a note as he entered the auditorium.

It was from an atheist who'd been giving Moody a great deal of trouble.

But he thought it was an announcement, so he quieted the large audience & prepared to read it.

Opening the folded piece of paper he found scrawled in large print only one word: "Fool!"

Moody read it, smiled, then said, "I have just been handed a note which contains the single word, 'Fool.' This is most unusual. I've often received letters from those who failed to sign them, but this is the first time I've ever received one in which the sender identified himself but failed to write the letter."

3. With ancient letters the author *began* by identifying him/herself.
4. But take careful note of **HOW** Paul identifies himself. He is *first & foremost* – a **bondservant of Jesus Christ**.
5. Some translations have just "servant" but "*bond-servant*" is better.
 - a. In Greek the word is *doulos*. It refers to someone who's **CHOSEN** to be a slave.
 - b. Theirs isn't an *enforced* submission; it's willing, ready, & joyous because it's motivated by love for the master.
 - c. The *doulos* was someone who *in love* gave up his/her will to another.
6. In Exodus 21, Moses gave the guidelines for how one *became* a bondservant.
 - a. In Israel, slavery only lasted for 6 years; in the 7th year the slave was set free & given enough resources to make a fresh start as a freeman..
 - b. But if when it came to go free, the servant had come to *love* the master so much he/she counted continuing service *better than freedom*, he/she could stay & become permanently bound to the master.
 - c. The master would take the servant to the doorpost of his house, place his/her earlobe on the post, then with an awl pierce the lobe.
 - d. Now they were *literally attached* to the master & his household.
 - e. The awl was withdrawn, the bleeding stopped, then an *earring* was fixed through the hole.
 - f. From that day on, the *doulos* was identified by all who saw him/her as someone who'd willingly forfeited personal freedom out of love for their master.
 - g. It was an *incredible testament* to the goodness of the master, that a slave would *chose* perpetual service rather than freedom.
 - h. What kind of love, provision, & protection would someone have to give to cause another to offer the rest of their lives in total submission?
7. The *first thing* Paul thinks of to *identify himself* is as a bondservant of Jesus.
 - a. He doesn't begin with any of the long list of accomplishments he could mention.
 - 1) *Founder* of dozens of churches.
 - 2) *Pioneer* of the Faith - *Author* of scripture.
 - 3) Most famous student of *Gamaliel*.
 - 5) Pre-eminent *theologian* & philosopher.
 - b. No – First & foremost he is the love-bound slave of Jesus Christ.
8. Self-image is a big deal today; always has been.
 - a. People spend a great deal of their time, money, & effort on building an identity that will garner them respect.

- b. Like the *Build A Bear* store in the mall, there are *dozens* of categories you can pick from to build your own personal identity - square, raver, skater, Goth, hip-hop, gangsta, surfer, punk, metro, waxhead, player, prep, mini, silent, jock, bent, nerd, geek, techie, gamer, & hack; to name a few.
 - c. The profusion of technology & popular media allows *each* of these groups to adopt its own lifestyle, from fashion to music.
 - d. Industry *encourages* all this because each new group provides a new market to hawk their wares to & make another buck.
9. But the issue of self-image & identity is *nothing new*. For generations people have wrestled with the question, “Who am I?”
10. Paul had found the answer & *begins* by identifying himself as a bondservant.
11. How about you; how do you identify *yourself*?
- a. What’s the first thing out of the gate if you were to sit down with a group of people you’d never met before & each one was giving a bio?
 - b. Would you seek to *impress* them with your accomplishments or who you know?
 - c. Or would you begin where Paul does – as a humble, devoted, *love-bound slave* of Jesus?
12. Paul’s claim here shows us he’d become *just like his rabbi Jesus*, who Phil. 2:7 tells us laid aside the glory of deity & took the place of a humble servant.
13. In Mark 10:45 Jesus said,
The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.
14. As the followers of Christ, we know we’re called to *serve* Him. Every believer is a servant.
- a. The question is, what *kind* of servant will we be?
 - b. Will we be servants who *chafe* under a yoke of bondage?
 - c. Will we *resist* our Master, *hating* that we’re called to serve, so not really embracing our identity?
 - d. Will our service be slow, partial, reluctant, regretted, begrudged, & filled with complaint?
 - e. Or will we be *bondservants*, who out of love for the Master, *embrace our identity* with delight & serve with joy.
15. Fred loathed ironing! It was a chore he dreaded.
- a. When he was a bachelor, he rarely ironed his clothes.
 - b. Then he got married & at first Jennie didn’t have to work so she ironed the laundry.
 - c. But when Fred lost his good-paying job & had to take another with a huge cut in salary, Jennie had to go to work too.
 - d. Over 40 hours a week meant she wasn’t able to iron as consistently as before.
 - e. Then Fred had his hours cut. Sitting home one afternoon, Jennie at work, he looked over & saw a pile of clothes that needed to be ironed.
 - f. He thought, “Man, I **HATE** ironing! I’m so glad Jen takes care of that.”
 - g. Then he thought about how hard she worked, the long hours she put in.
 - h. The thought of her standing at the ironing board working through that stack of clothes really bothered him. She didn’t loath ironing like he did but she certainly didn’t enjoy it.
 - i. So he got up, plugged in the iron, filled it with distilled water, sorted the clothes into pants & tops, turned on Oprah, & went to work.
 - j. Because what he was doing was *an act of love* for his sweetheart, it wasn’t the onerous burden he thought it would be. Each piece he finished & placed on a hangar *increased* his joy.
16. Love transforms even the most difficult tasks into a delight.
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17. After first identifying himself as a bondservant, Paul says he was . . .
called to be an apostle,

18. His service as a slave was discharged by being faithful to his assignment as an apostle.
19. Think of an apostle as an *ambassador* –
- Someone officially authorized by a king to speak for him & represent his interests.
 - An apostle was an *agent of the throne*, charged with making the king's will known to others.
20. From the moment of his conversion on the road outside Damascus, Paul knew Jesus had selected him to be an ambassador of His Kingdom.
21. Like Paul, *we're* to serve God by being faithful to our *calling*, our *appointment*, whatever & where ever that may be.
- Know this – When God called you to Himself, He placed a divine call upon your life to serve Him in a specific capacity.
 - A few are called to be *pastors* or *missionaries*. Some are called to be *teachers*.
 - But there are many other callings that are just as important as these.
 - God calls some to be salespeople, mechanics, accountants, secretaries, cooks, baristas, artists, musicians, philosophers, scientists, engineers, soldiers, athletes, coaches, reporters, senators, school board members.
 - And for some, their *primary* calling, their *chief ministry* is to be a *husband & father*; a *wife & mother*. That is as noble a calling as any other if it is *indeed the appointment* God has placed on your life.
22. What's important is that each of us *know* what our calling is, then apply ourselves to be faithful in it.
23. You discover your calling by asking God to make it clear.

24. Then Paul says he was . . .

separated to the gospel of God

25. "Separated" is a Greek word meaning to mark something off by boundaries & reserve it for a special purpose.
26. Paul knew he had a unique role in God's plan & that his life was to be centered on, defined by, proclaiming the Good News.
- The Greek word translated as "separate" sounds very much like the word "Pharisee," which Paul had been at one time.
 - Pharisees were "Separated Ones"- Jewish men who were ultra-scrupulous in their keeping of the law of Moses.
 - They were Pharisees because they distanced themselves from the common people who didn't show as devoted a lifestyle as they.
 - So careful were they in keeping the law when it came time to harvest their little herb garden, they gave each tenth seed or leaf to the Lord.
 - Paul had been a Pharisee of the Pharisees; his devotion to the Law made even other Pharisees look weak.
 - But when he came to Christ, his separation *to the law* shifted to a separation to the Gospel OF GOD.
27. Don't miss that – it's crucial! It isn't just "the Gospel—*Period*."
- It's the gospel **OF GOD**; meaning it's *His*.
 - It *belongs* to Him, but it's given to Paul to share with others.
28. I wish the world understood that God has some really good news to give them if they'd only listen.
- He doesn't come with a club ready to smite them.
 - The message He wants proclaimed is *Good* News, not Bad.
 - It's good news that He loves the world & has provided a way for them to be forgiven & restored to Him.

- d. Of course, the **NEED** for forgiveness & reconciliation means something's *wrong*.
 - e. Man is lost in sin & destined for eternal damnation apart from Christ.
29. But Paul understood his calling & mission as coming to a lost world with God's *Good News*, not bad.
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30. There's a not a lot of good news today.
- a. The news is filled with reports of trouble looming in every direction.
 - b. Politics, the economy, the environment, immigration, the situation in the Middle East.
 - c. The future looks bleak. If there was ever a time when the world needed some Good News, it's *now!*

B. Vs. 2-4

1. Regarding the Gospel of God, Paul says in v. 2 -
² **which He promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures, ³ concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, ⁴ and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.**
 2. All that had happened to Jesus, from His birth by Mary, a *descendant* of King David,
 3. To His resurrection from the dead which proves His deity, had been *foretold* by the prophets of old.
 4. Contrary to Paul's critics, there was nothing in his message that wasn't contained in the Scriptures.
 5. The whole life & career of Christ was spelled out there & was plain for them to see.
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6. To this day there are liberal scholars who claim Paul *hijacked* the Jesus Movement & altered the fundamental meaning of Jesus' mission.
 - a. They say all Jesus *intended* to do was *reform* Judaism, to remove the corruption that had infected the Jewish religion.
 - b. They say Paul *messed up* Jesus' reforms with his doctrine of salvation by grace through faith.
 7. But *nothing* Paul said or taught was an innovation – it was *all foretold* by the OT prophets.
 8. In fact this is what made the Gospel *so compelling* to the fair-minded Jews who gave Paul's message an honest evaluation.
 - a. It wasn't the Gospel of grace that stumbled Paul's Jewish opponents & led to the hostility that so often came against him.
 - b. What fired up his enemies was his audacity, his cheek at saying *God accepted Gentiles the same way* He accepted Jews. Oh! that frosted them. They *hated* him for it.
 - c. Yet the prophets foretold God would bring the Good News to Gentiles & they would come to faith in Him.

C. Vs. 5-6

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- Through Him we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations for His name, ⁶ among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ;**
1. This is Paul's first use of the word "*grace*" which will be such an important part of the rest of the letter.
 - a. Grace is the unearned favor & blessing God pours on us *because* of what Jesus did.
 - b. Grace isn't something we strive for, earn, work up to, or in *any* way acquire through our own efforts.
 - c. Grace comes only one way; as it says here – *We receive it . . .*
Through Him we have received grace
 2. Everything God has for us is located in **one place – Jesus!** He is the "one stop" for all we're looking for & need.
 3. Grace comes *through* Him. Healing comes *through* Him.

- Purpose & meaning are *in* Him. Hope is *in* Him. Joy & strength are *in* Him. **LIFE** is *in* Him.
4. This is why Jesus calls us to ***abide in Him***. It's why 42 times in Ephesians Paul urges us to remain *in Christ*.
 5. To *everyone* here today, know this→
Everything we need / looking for is found in only one place = Jesus.
 6. Paul says along with grace comes **“apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations for His name.”**
 7. Everything believers in any place in the world need to grow in their relationship with God, including grace & the ministry of the apostles, comes through the work of Christ.
 8. It's His Church; He'll take care of it.
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9. In v. 6, Paul affirms the place of the Roman believers in the Body of Christ.
 10. They also **are the called of, literally belonging to, Jesus Christ**.
 11. Jesus *picked* them & now they are His.
 12. See it like this. **YOU** decided to come to CC today. But let's say after you got here, you found out after service we're hosting a county wide volleyball tournament.
 - a. Karch Kiraly & Sinjin Smith are the co-captains of our church team.
 - b. They come up to you & say *you've* been picked to play on the team & to represent CC in the tourney.
 - c. Most of us would wave them off & say, “No way! I can't play at that level!”
 - d. They say it's going to be okay because ***along with their call*** that puts you on the team is the impartation of all the skill you'll need to play your part & contribute to a win.
 13. **Jesus picked you!** He called *you* out of the mass of humanity & put you on His team.
 14. With that call comes all you need to play your part & to contribute to the victory of God's Kingdom.
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15. One of the major fashions today is the wearing of athletic jerseys.
 - a. Guys & girls sport their favorite team's colors & their favorite player's number.
 - b. Our favorite team ought to be the *Saints* (not New Orleans), & our favorite player is the **Only One** = *Jesus*.

D. V. 7

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.

1. We end with this today – a verse that deserves a whole week in itself
2. Paul says the believers at Rome were ***beloved of God***.
 - a. I don't know what your idea of God is but please hear this – **God LOVES YOU!**
 - b. He loves ***the world*** so much He sent his Precious Son to die for our sins.
 - c. But the Father loves the ***Son*** so much, He holds a ***special love*** for those Who love the Son too.
 - d. If I could use an imperfect analogy; I love my children. Nothing could alter that love.
 - 1) Over the years when they were young, I loved them even when they weren't obeying or respecting their mother as they ought to.
 - 2) But when they were kind, respectful & obedient to their mother, my wife whom I adore, well ***then*** they were in a place where they could ***enjoy*** a fuller expression of my love.
 - 3) When they ***actively*** loved ***my beloved wife*** – ***well, it was all love, a house & family of love.***
 - e. And so it is with God. He loves all, but He has a special love for those who open to that love.
3. These ***beloved*** of God are **called saints** – note that the words “*to be*” are in italics; they're added by the translators to help explain the text, but in this case they obscure the meaning, not help it.
 - a. A saint isn't a little plastic statue you stick on the dashboard.
 - b. Or some super-spiritual person canonized by the Roman Church.

- c. In the NT, *all* the followers of Christ are saints.
4. The word simply means one who is set apart by from the petty, vain things of this world *to* the special purposes of God.
5. And if you're a believer, that's **YOU!** You're a saint.
6. A teacher was teaching his 3rd grade Sunday School class this truth. He asked, "Who knows what a saint is?"
 - a. One little girl, thinking of a stained glass window raised her hand & said, "A saint is someone the light shines through."
 - b. That's a great definition for what a saint is – someone though whom the light, love, & truth of Jesus shines through.
7. Paul finishes his greeting with – **"Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."**
 - a. Oh, there's so much in that.
 - b. But let me end with this simple observation: Grace always precedes peace.
 - c. Without God's favor & blessing coming *first* there can be no peace.
 - d. Without the work of His grace forgiving our sins & reconciling us to God through the Cross, we are at war with heaven & at odds with Him.
8. Peace is the great need of the human heart & our sin-sick world.
9. But there's no peace without grace. Where grace comes & does its work, ah, then there's peace!