

Romans 1:5-7

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[0:00] While I get myself settled, let me invite you to open up your Bibles to Romans chapter 1.!

Paul's salutation in this, the greatest letter ever written, I argued. Our outline followed the way that Paul establishes the authority by which he writes.

His hope and mine last week was to draw your attention to the letter and to say that it matters, it's important. I think that getting Romans right helps us to set in context so much of the Scripture.

So this morning, the plan is to study the rest of the salutation, which we see in verses 5 through 7. And I'm grateful to be back in a text and slowing down and taking the time to meditate on just a couple of verses at a time.

But before I read verses 5 through 7, I want to begin in verse 1. It's the beginning of the salutation and it just will make more sense if we begin reading there.

[1:30] So let me read beginning in verse 1 and remind you, beloved, that this is God's Word to us. And it was written for His glory and our good.

And so we would all do well to listen to it in order to believe its promises and obey its commands. 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 Scriptures, 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. And in verses 5 through 7, Paul tells the Roman believers and us that we have been called to a purpose, that we have been called to belong to Jesus Christ, and that we have been called to be saints.

And these three callings will be our outline points for today. So first, in verse 5, we see that we are called to a purpose.

[3:13] And I want to first note that in verse 5, Paul does not use the word called as he does in verses 6 and 7. He does, however, use the word in relation to his own calling as an apostle in verse 1, which I asserted last week was an appeal to his authority as one of the men especially set apart in history to the office of apostle.

Those 12 plus Paul. This is not the apostleship that he is referring to here in verse 5. He is not saying that we are all or that anybody amongst us might be called this capital A apostle.

But he is using it in a more broad and generic way. That said, we will do well to not minimize the general calling of all who are in Christ Jesus to be sent ones.

This is what the word apostle means, sent one. It is the most literal translation of the word here we find, apostleship. In order for us to see this as a calling upon all Christians from this text, we need to deal with some translation challenges.

Now, anytime we come upon a text that brilliant men who have gone before us disagree upon, we've got to take a little extra time. We've got to pause and really think together.

[4:41] So I'm going to share with you what I believe Paul is communicating here. And maybe at the end of it, you might disagree with me. But I think the purpose still lands biblically all the same.

First, we need to deal with the plural pronoun we. Now, it's important to know that it is not inserted there. In fact, that is a phrase altogether, which is a single word in Greek.

We have received. It's a plural noun, which means the we is entirely appropriate in English.

But to whom does the we apply? Some commentators argue that he is using his pronoun in reference to his particular calling as an apostle, along with others particularly called to share the gospel with Gentiles.

Perhaps those in his missionary band of brothers. I don't find this making much sense because he hasn't introduced himself along with anybody else as he does in other letters.

[5:49] He simply introduces himself, Paul, and doesn't refer to himself singularly, but rather than he uses the plural pronoun we. I believe that this plural pronoun is more inclusive than that in light of another translation challenge.

In the ESV, the phrase at the end of verse 5 is rendered among all the nations. I think most of you are using ESV since that's what we tend to preach from here.

But some translations, good translations like the NASB, which we love, render it among all the Gentiles.

So this Greek word, sometimes translated nations and sometimes translated Gentiles, is going to be used a lot in this letter.

So I anticipate there's going to be some future potential challenges we may find as we work our way through. In fact, Paul uses it 29 times in the book of Romans.

[6:54] Its root is the word ethnos, from which we get our English words ethnic or ethnicity. So it is fair to translate it Gentiles.

It is also fair to translate it as nations, as the word is meant to communicate non-Jewish people. And I think this is one of those cases that we don't have a really great equivalent English word, because the Greek word seems to have more depth than any single word we might place in its spot.

Now, I think, and I am not a Greek scholar, so take this with a grain of salt, but I think that perhaps another good word here would have been the word peoples.

I think that may get at its core meaning a little bit better, I say with a great measure of humility. But however it is decided upon, there is a phrase that precedes this word, and that phrase is among all. So whether it's among all the people, or among all the nations, or among all the Gentiles, Paul could have simply said among the Gentiles as he does elsewhere, but he does not.

[8:18] He says among all the ethnos. He broadens the scope, and I believe he does so because the plural pronoun we applies to his original audience, and it applies to you and to me.

He's expanding it beyond even just his missionary call, or that of those Roman believers who we know were a mix of Gentile believers and Jewish believers.

He's saying this gospel, this message, is meant to go to the very ends of the earth, beyond even the known world of their time.

So, if you're still with me, let's see what you and what I have received. A calling to a purpose.

Paul is saying here that we are meant to bring about the obedience of faith. We're to bring about the obedience of faith.

[9:33] First, and as we will see more starkly in subsequent studies of this book, God is the primary cause of all faith.

It originates with him. But that does not preclude the secondary working of those who take up the ordinary means to see people come to faith.

Namely, the call to repent and to believe. Paul is not here saying that we can somehow manipulate or muster up faith in people.

He is not saying that we are primary cause. He will argue for us again and again throughout this letter that this is not the case.

But he does know that God uses his people to bring about the salvation of his people. As a simple example, Romans chapter 10 and verse 14.

[10:34] He says, So God uses the proclamation of his word both in bigger public settings and privately one-to-one to bring about the obedience of faith.

The obedience of faith was the major content of Jesus' preaching. In Mark chapter 1 and verse 15, he said, The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand.

Repent and believe in the gospel. This must also be the primary thrust of what we do as God's people.

There are many other good things to be done in this world. Sometimes those things can become distractions from the main thing rather than platform and help for the main thing.

Some get distracted by social justice. Others get distracted by political cause. Some get distracted by the seeking of miracles.

[11:51] And beloved, let me say to you, if you want to see a miracle, see a dead, defiant soul come to life in Christ.

There is no greater thing that God does miraculously in this world than make dead people alive. So as a command from God incarnate, it is a matter of obedience to turn away from one's sin and turn in faith to the saving work of Christ.

To decide that the way of the world is not a way that is pleasing to our God and to turn to his way in Christ. If a person does not heed this command, they are committing a grievous act of wicked rebellion.

So you here this morning, just hearing the call, repent and believe, turn from your sin and place your faith in Christ. If you don't, you are in rebellion against a most holy God who will judge the living and the dead.

Paul certainly here means that we are meant to see peoples everywhere repent and believe. The thrust, the core of it is that people would come to saving faith in Christ.

[13:06] But I also think he means more by this phrase. You see, genuine faith is obedient faith. We are not saved by our works.

But if we place our faith in Jesus Christ, it is a faith that will work. The person who has been saved by Christ does not arrive at perfection on this side of glory.

But that person will, in ever-increasing measure, be obedient to Christ. We will continually, bit by bit, one degree of glory to another, look more like our Savior.

This is the doctrine of progressive sanctification. I like that many scholars call it biblical sanctification. And we live in an age of easy believism.

We're looking for people to raise a hand or walk an aisle, sign a card. We live in a day in which the declaration, I am a Christian, makes that declaration factual.

[14:18] Just look at statistics in our day, right? What do evangelicals believe? And you could very quickly look at what evangelicals declare they believe and say, you're not an evangelical at all.

How could you possibly say you're a Christ follower when you deny his very person? And we live in an age that to show people from the word that transformed people should live as transformed people is shockingly unpopular.

We finished studying not too long ago the book of James. And James says this so clearly. And I'm so grateful for this letter.

It's of interest to you. We'll talk in some coming weeks about the Reformation. Martin Luther was translating the book of Romans as kind of a balm for him.

They were trying to get him to calm down about the trouble of the state of his soul. And he came across Romans 1.16. He came to understand by revelation of the Spirit that salvation is by faith alone.

[15:26] We're going to see that repeated theme throughout this letter. We're saved by grace alone, through faith alone, and the person and work of Jesus Christ alone. He thought this was so important to our understanding as Christians that he didn't want the book of James included in the canon.

He wanted it discluded just in case anybody might be confused. And so we have to be so careful at this point. But let me read to you just three verses from James 2.

This is verse 17 and following. James says, So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. But someone will say, You have faith and I have works.

Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. He's saying it's nonsensical just to say you have faith.

You have to actually evidence that you believe something to be true. And then he says this astounding thing in verse 19. He says, You believe that God is one.

[16:32] You do well. So here's a declaration of faith. I believe that God is one. He says, You do well. But then he says, Even the demons believe and shudder.

And they do not have saving faith. Jesus says it in Matthew chapter 7. Similarly, the Sermon on the Mount, speaking of the judgment that will come, beginning in verse 18 and following, he says, A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit.

We're shown who we are by what's being produced in us. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

Thus you will recognize them by their fruits. And if that doesn't make you shudder enough, he says in verse 21 and following, Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven.

But the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day, many will say to me, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and cast out demons in your name and do many mighty works in your name?

[17:52] And then I will declare to them, I never knew you. Depart from me, you workers of lawlessness. So it's altogether possible to do the things that you think you ought to be doing and not to be producing righteousness as a result of your saving faith.

It is of great concern to me that you may think you are a Christian because you declared it so, but that you have yet to experience the transformative work of Christ.

that you're not going about the labor of being an active part of a church. That you're not making your calling and election sure. That you're not working out your salvation with fear and trembling. That you're not asking others to examine you and correct you that they might find in you repentance and continued faith. Please this morning, if you think you are in Christ and you don't evidence that in your works at all, come talk to somebody.

We want you to see in your life ever-changing growth in glory. None of us will arrive. None of us this side of heaven.

[19:16] But be sure that you're not deceiving yourself. That you're not deluded in thinking that you're in Christ simply because you've declared it so.

We are to bring about the obedience of faith. A faith that works, that expresses itself.

This is a purpose that's given to each and every one of us who are in Christ. Christ, we have been set apart for this work. Sent into the world for this work.

And this is a work done by grace. We received grace and apostleship. And it's done primarily in the context of the local church.

Turn with me, if you would, to Matthew chapter 28. It's a text that I hope that you're familiar with. Amen. We'll look at verses 18 through 20, but I want to read first verse 19.

[20:38] If you have any church background and you've heard this, Jesus says, Go therefore and make disciples of all nations. There's that word again, ethnos.

Baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. And this verse rightly in so many ways becomes the drumbeat of churches and mission movements.

It's a wonderful command. It's a command that should be obeyed. But often we miss that there's something key happening in this and that is the baptizing of these disciples.

Baptism is an ordinance of the church. So Jesus has embedded right into this what we call the Great Commission, the centrality of the church in doing this work.

We're to go and make disciples of all peoples and we're to baptize them in the name of the Holy and of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

[21:44] We're to go and we're to create churches so that verse 20 says we can teach them to observe all that I have commanded you.

To bring about the obedience of faith. But a lot of people also miss the bookends of this great command that begins in verse 18 and ends in the last half of verse 20.

We act as if the task is for us to go and do something for Jesus. And you hear this language used all the time. As if our Lord did his three years, completed the task, left, and said, good luck y'all. I've got a task for you to accomplish. I'll be watching. Go get it done. And whether we say we're doing this, we have any mental assertion that that's what we're doing, we often functionally do this. And we forget that in verse 18 Jesus says, all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

[22:56] He says, I am completely and totally in charge. So, Jesus Christ as the primary means, he says to us as secondary means, go make disciples, baptize them, share the gospel, see people come to faith, start churches, teach them to observe all that was commanded, bring about the obedience of faith, and then he says, and behold, I am with you always to the end of the age.

So, we don't do things for Jesus, we do things by Jesus. For the great grace he's given us, by the power he works within us.

What an astounding task. Praise God that it is an empowered task, for we, apart from the grace of God, are altogether unworthy for it.

Apart from God's saving grace, grace, we would not be sent ones, and apart from his sustaining grace, we would be no good for the task. I mentioned last week that Paul begins his appeal to his authoritative role to write this letter with a great measure of humility.

He introduces himself as a servant of Christ, Jesus. May we approach the task with the same humility. Karl Barth once said of this text, only when grace is recognized to be incomprehensible is it grace.

[24:35] That God would call me and that God would call you to be sent into the world to bring about the obedience of faith and that he provides all that is necessary for that is an astounding reality.

It should be incomprehensible to our hearts. So we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith.

We have a very specific purpose and our purpose has a purpose. It has a purpose. Paul says for the sake of his name among all the nations.

We are to be used as the secondary means of bringing all the praise and adoration due the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. I want to read something brief to you from Martin Lloyd Jones' commentary on this text.

He writes, the introduction of this term name is important and significant. The name in scripture always stands for the revelation by which we know and apprehend the person indicated.

[25:51] In the Old Testament for instance, God revealed himself to the nation of Israel through his names. You will find them in the Old Testament scriptures. Jehovah and the various additions to that.

Jehovah Jireh, Jehovah Shalom, and so on. God makes himself known through names. Names which are descriptive of him, of his person, of his motives, of his desires, and of his activities.

The name reveals the man. We say about a man that he has a great name as a barrister or as a doctor or whatever his calling. We mean by this that the name which he has made for himself tells us about him.

Now the apostle uses it in that sense here. The name stands for and represents the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. We are meant as the high end of bringing about the obedience of faith to see God glorified in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Another word for glorified is magnified. If you've been here long, you've heard me share this wonderful example from John Piper. He expresses there are two types of magnification.

[27:10] There's the magnification that a microscope does where it makes small things look bigger than they actually are. And then there's the type of magnification that a telescope does that makes huge things look more like they actually are.

And this is the type of magnification we do as we by grace bring about the obedience of faith. Making a massive God look more as he actually is.

Our lives our obedience of faith and our work to bring about the obedience of faith is divinely designed to magnify the one to whom we belong.

Beloved because our God is great we should desire that he would be greatly praised. I admit that sometimes to my shame I lose sight of this.

The gospel is not simply about me or about us but it is about the glory of our God among all peoples. If our theology does not lead to does not drive doxology the praise of our God either something is amiss with our theology or something is amiss in our hearts and God have mercy on us.

[28:38] Now I am about to land my first point and I am noting that it is afternoon so let me actually conclude today with this and we'll pick back up the following two points next week I want to read the first four verses of Psalm 96 and then I'll pray oh sing to the Lord a new song sing to the Lord all the earth sing to the Lord bless his name tell of his salvation from day to day declare his glory among the nations his marvelous works among all the peoples for great is the Lord and greatly to be praised!

He is to be feared above all gods let's pray together as