



The Letter to the Romans

Good News for All People

2. GRACE RECEIVED

Romans 1:1-7

INTRODUCTION

Verses 1-7 are the salutation for the letter in a standard epistolary form. The salutation identifies the author and the recipients, with a greeting of blessing. Paul introduces the unifying theme of the letter here, which is the gospel. He is careful to the gospel did not originate with him and he did not preach it of his own authority. He shows the scope of the gospel as including Jews and Gentiles. Paul sets the tone for the letter to follow.

VERSES 1-7 THE SALUTATION

Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God,

- Romans 1:1

Paul began in this verse by identifying himself as the slave of Jesus Christ. The word he used means slave, or bond-slave. It referred to being under the total control of another. It is a part of his identity as the writer of this letter, like James (James 1:1), Peter (2 Peter 1:1), and Jude (Jude 1). Paul's use of this term emphasizes the fact his writing is not of his own will and the content of what he wrote is not of his own mind.

The word for *called* means to be chosen, or appointed, and in this case it is to the office of apostle. The word for *apostle* means a delegate, or an ambassador. It refers to one sent and typically means more than a mere messenger. The one sent is an authorized representative. Jesus originally chose twelve apostles to whom he gave authority to work signs and preach the message of Jesus (Luke 6:12-13; 9:1-2, 6, 10). They were specially tasked with giving

the revelation of Jesus to his churches after his ascension. This is why the churches were to continue in the apostles' doctrine. Ultimately, they would give the New Testament, the completed revelation from God begun with the Old Testament.

Paul was not one of the original twelve, but he explained his apostleship this way: "And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time. For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God" (1 Corinthians 15:8-9). He also emphasized how he received revelation directly from Jesus: "But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ" (Galatians 1:11-12). The word Paul used for *revelation* in that verse means appearing, or appearance.

Paul also emphasized that his apostleship and gospel was directly from Jesus Christ and that was also recognized by the other apostles: "But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto to me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter; (For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles:) And when James, Cephas, and John, who seems to be pillars perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision" (Galatians 2:7-9). Paul also stated that he was set apart unto the gospel. He referred to his commission to preach the gospel in Acts 9:15-16.

The gospel is the unifying theme of the letter to the Romans. Paul played a significant role in clarifying the gospel and its implications for Jews and Gentiles. He preached the gospel in the synagogue in Antioch of Pisidia. After declaring the death and resurrection of Jesus, he said, "Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses" (Acts 13:38-39).

(Which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures,)

- Romans 1:2

Verses 2-4 further describes the gospel he was set apart to and appointed to declare. After he finished this letter, Paul left Corinth and went to Jerusalem, where he was arrested and accused of being a traitor to Israel and teaching contrary to Moses. In verse 2, he explained that the good news he preached was exactly what God had promised beforehand through Moses and all the prophets. He refers here to the entire Old Testament revelation.

Paul would stand before Agrippa in Caesarea somewhere around two to three years after writing this letter, and there he would say the same thing he wrote in this letter. Paul said to Agrippa, "Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to the small and great, saying none other things that those which the prophets and Moses did say should come: That Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that

should rise from the dead, and should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles” (Acts 26:22-23). He went on to press Agrippa, explaining that believing the prophets meant believing Paul’s preaching: “But he said, I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak for the words of truth and soberness. For the king knoweth of these things, before whom also I speak freely: for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him; for this thing was not done in a corner. King Agrippa, believes thou the prophets? I know that thou believest” (Acts 26:25-27).

Paul viewed the apostles, including himself, standing in the line of revelation beginning with Moses, continuing with the prophets, and would ultimately be concluded with the Apostle John and the Revelation of Jesus Christ. He understood he and the other apostles were progressing the revelation begun before them to bring it completion. The phrase, “holy scriptures,” distinguishes the Old Testament scriptures from all other writings, including the ancient rabbinical writings.

Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh;

- Romans 1:3

Paul further explained what was promised before by God through his prophets. Jesus Christ is God’s Son. He is Savior, Messiah, and God. The reference to David refers to his incarnation and lineage. Jesus took on human flesh and was born of a woman. He was born into the human family through descent from David, as promised before: “And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever” (2 Samuel 7:12-13).

The promise pertaining to David’s son was obviously not fulfilled in Solomon, who was the son to succeed David on the throne. The failures of Solomon make that plain, as well as the prophecy of Isaiah a couple of centuries after Solomon: “And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots:” (Isaiah 11:1). Both Matthew and Luke record genealogies demonstrating the descent of Jesus from David.

And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead:

- Romans 1:4

Jesus was further proved to be the Son of God after his death by his resurrection from the dead. Consider the substance of the apostolic witness given in Acts 2:22-26, and consistently given throughout Acts. The apostles were witnesses of his resurrection. Paul referred to hundreds of witnesses to his resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15:5-8. Other than being eyewitnesses, the apostles showed how his resurrection fulfilled Old Testament prophecies.

By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name:

- Romans 1:5

Paul and the other apostles received grace and apostleship by the resurrected Son of God, Jesus Christ. Paul had already preached before this letter, and would go on to write in this letter, that salvation is a gift of God's grace to undeserving sinners. The office of apostleship was like a gift of grace upon the twelve and himself. Paul knew he was preaching and writing the very words of God and he doesn't take any personal credit for it.

He also explained the gospel is good news preached to all, both Jews and Gentiles. The message is not different for one or the other. The same salvation is experienced by all who repent, believe, and receive forgiveness of sins and justification by faith.

Among whom are ye also called of Jesus Christ:

- Romans 1:6

Paul addressed the Roman Christians directly as the called, chosen of Jesus Christ. This refers to the all nations in the previous verse. We infer from this that he addressed the Gentiles in Rome. It gives us the idea that Gentile believers probably outnumbered the Jewish believers in the Roman churches. The Gentiles also have a part in the plan of God and their blessing is the riches of God's grace toward them.

To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

- Romans 1:7

Paul finished the salutation by directly addressing the recipients. He wrote to those in Rome who are loved and called of God. He clarified the calling or choice of them by God is for them to be saints. The word he used means holy ones, but doesn't refer to any special class or division of Christians. Saints are described in 2 Thessalonians 1:10 as, "all them that believe."

Paul greeted them with the blessing of grace and peace. This is not just a general well-wishing, but he anticipated the blessing of this word to them. Ultimately, all who read and believe will be blessed.

CONCLUSION

Paul clearly set out the gospel as the unifying theme of his message to the Romans. He also foreshadowed two other concerns with the mention of the seed of David and the resurrection of the dead. He referred to the hope of Israel, the resurrection, as he preached in Acts

as well. Paul secondly mentioned all nations. He referred to the Gentile inclusion in the salvation and justification by faith in Jesus Christ. He will have more to say to these issues as the letter develops. In this salutation, he also laid the foundation for the unity of Jews and Gentiles in Christ, which he will get to late in the letter.

This salutation sets the stage for promise and fulfillment by God. Paul presented God as the sovereign who faithfully keeps and fulfills his promises. The salutation is saturated with God's grace. Whether Jews, Gentiles, disciples, saints, or apostles, all these have been received as a gift of God's grace to the undeserving.

The salutation established Paul's view of revelation. The law led to the prophets and leads to the apostles to complete the revelation. All revelation is revelation of the Father, Son, and Spirit in bringing Jesus Christ into the world, the seed of David, to die and rise again for the salvation of all who believe and the fulfillment of all God's promises.

ABOUT THIS SERIES

This series is a verse by verse expository study of the Letter to the Romans. Each sermon typically covers one paragraph of the text of the letter. This PDF is provided freely for personal study. Each sermon has been prepared and preached by Jeff Short, the pastor of Harmony Baptist Church.

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