

Last week we learned of the importance of this letter from Paul to the church in Rome. He had not yet visited the city, but knew a number of the people in the church, having met them in other cities. Recognizing the strategic importance of the city, Paul wanted to be sure they understood the true gospel. He began by telling them who he was, a slave of Jesus, and called to be His official representative. His life was set apart for the good news of God. These are Paul's credentials and self-descriptions. I challenged you to consider who you are. How would you describe yourself? All of us who are servants of Christ are called to represent Him in whatever work we do. (1Corinthians 10:31)

Paul was set apart for the gospel of God, ² *which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures*, Romans 1:2 (ESV) This was the great paradigm shift that transformed Paul's life. He was persecuting followers of Jesus because Paul did not believe Jesus fulfilled the Scriptures and was therefore a false Messiah. But when Jesus met Paul on the road to Damascus, his interpretation of the Scriptures he loved and respected took on a new light. I can only imagine the insights he gained from those three years in Arabia and Damascus as he pondered the Word pointing to Jesus as the Messiah, the good news promised beforehand through God's prophets (Galatians 1:17). Simply put, the gospel of God is that Jesus made it possible to exchange our sins for His righteousness! If we accept that gift by faith we will escape the wrath of God and live eternally in His glorious presence (John 3:36). That is really, really, good news!

When Paul went to Thessalonica, he first went to the local synagogue. ² *And Paul went in, as was his custom, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, ³ explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead, and saying, "This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ."* Acts 17:2-3 (ESV) Over and over in the book of Acts we see Paul reasoning with the Jews (Acts 17:17; 18:4; 18:19; 19:8). He is reasoning with them about the interpretation of prophetic Scripture. It was not some new religion he was proclaiming; it was the fulfillment of their ancient faith. He wrote to the Corinthians, ³ *For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures*, 1 Corinthians 15:3 (ESV)

Paul may have preached something like this: God promised Eve that a male descendant of the woman would crush the head of the serpent (Genesis 3:15), the Devil. God promised Israel that one of his descendants would bless the world (Genesis 28:14). God promised David that one of his heirs would reign forever (2Samuel 7:12-13). Isaiah the prophet said he would be born a child, a son given to us, and he would be called Mighty God (Isaiah 9:6-7). Micah predicted he would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2). Isaiah

Commented [notes1]: 1 Corinthians 10:31 (ESV)

³¹ So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

Commented [notes2]: Galatians 1:17 (ESV)

¹⁷ nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me, but I went away into Arabia, and returned again to Damascus.

Commented [notes3]: John 3:36 (NIV)

³⁶ Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him."

Commented [notes4]: Acts 17:17 (ESV)

¹⁷ So he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons, and in the marketplace every day with those who happened to be there.

Commented [notes5]: Acts 18:4 (ESV)

⁴ And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and tried to persuade Jews and Greeks.

Commented [notes6]: Acts 18:19 (ESV)

¹⁹ And they came to Ephesus, and he left them there, but he himself went into the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews.

Commented [notes7]: Acts 19:8 (ESV)

⁸ And he entered the synagogue and for three months spoke boldly, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God.

Commented [notes8]: Genesis 3:15 (ESV)

¹⁵ I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."

Commented [notes9]: Genesis 28:14 (ESV)

¹⁴ Your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south, and in you and your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed.

Commented [notes10]: 2 Samuel 7:12-13 (ESV)

¹² When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom.

¹³ He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.

Commented [notes11]: Isaiah 9:6-7 (ESV)

⁶ For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

⁷ Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

Commented [notes12]: Micah 5:2 (ESV)

² But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days.

told us how He would suffer for our sins (Isaiah 53:4-5). David predicted his death by crucifixion (Psalm 22:16). Hosea said he would rise after three days (Hosea 6:2). David said He would not decay but would ascend into heaven and give gifts to men (Psalm 16:10; 68:18). This is exactly what we see in the life of Jesus of Nazareth, a man whom no one could accuse of sin. Even Pilate declared there was no fault in Him (John 19:4). What greater proof do you need than His own victory over death? This is the Messiah! He is a deliverer like Moses who delivers us from our greatest enemies, sin and death (Deuteronomy 18:15)! Believe in Him. Trust in Him and be saved.

I'm sure Paul had another two or three hundred verses as proofs that Jesus was indeed the long awaited Messiah. But even if your audience doesn't accept the Bible as truth, can any other religion point to just four or five recorded prophecies that were fulfilled in the life of their leader? Did their leader even claim to be God incarnate? Did they perform irrefutable miracles in the presence of thousands? Can any other religion point to an empty tomb? You see, we can reason with people today like Paul did and then and challenge them to consider the open invitation of Jesus to the entire world. *"If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink."* John 7:37b (ESV) Who, but God alone, could claim to satisfy the spiritual thirst of anyone?

Paul proclaimed the good news of God ³ *concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh* Romans 1:3 (ESV) Nathan the prophet had told King David that God would build him a house, that his heir would reign forever. The Jews began to refer to the coming Messiah as the Son of David. Jesus was from Nazareth, a town that was inhabited by the descendants of David, and the New Testament genealogies of Jesus show that He was indeed in the line of David. Jesus' DNA was from the line of David, though the Holy Spirit gave Him life in the womb of Mary.

Because of Jesus' incredible miracles, some would later claim he was not a physical being but an apparition. Paul and John both emphatically deny such an idea (Galatians 4:4; 1John 1:1). He was just as physical a being as you or me. He grew weary at times, felt stress, aged, grieved, and felt loss. Being human means that what He did by the power of the Spirit we can do. In fact, He said we would do greater things (John 14:12). "He became what we are to make us what He is." (2Corinthians 8:9)

If verse three stressed Jesus' humanity, verse four stresses He is divine as well. 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,* Romans 1:4 (ESV) Two things separate Jesus from all other people that ever have or ever will live. He was holy. He never sinned. He was tempted just like we are, and I believe to an even greater extent (Hebrews 4:15). Consider how desperate Satan would have been to see Jesus fail. If Satan took out all the stops for Job (Job 2:4-5), imagine how earnestly He attacked Jesus. Only the Son of God could live a sinless life. Only He could ask if anyone had ever seen anything of which they could accuse Him (John 8:46).

Commented [notes13]: Isaiah 53:4-5 (ESV)

⁴ Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. ⁵ But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed.

Commented [notes14]: Psalm 22:16 (ESV)

¹⁶ For dogs encompass me; a company of evildoers encircles me; they have pierced my hands and feet -

Commented [notes15]: Hosea 6:2 (ESV)

² After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will raise us up, that we may live before him.

Commented [notes16]: Psalm 16:10 (ESV)

¹⁰ For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your holy one see corruption.

Commented [notes17]: Psalm 68:18 (ESV)

¹⁸ You ascended on high, leading a host of captives in your train and receiving gifts among men, even among the rebellious, that the LORD God may dwell there.

Commented [notes18]: John 19:4 (ESV)

⁴ Pilate went out again and said to them, "See, I am bringing him out to you that you may know that I find no guilt in him."

Commented [notes19]: Deuteronomy 18:15 (ESV)

¹⁵ "The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers—it is to him you shall listen"

Commented [notes20]: Galatians 4:4 (ESV)

⁴ But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law,

Commented [notes21]: 1 John 1:1 (ESV)

¹ That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life-

Commented [notes22]: John 14:12 (ESV)

¹² "Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father.

Commented [notes23]: 2 Corinthians 8:9 (ESV)

⁹ For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.

Commented [notes24]: Hebrews 4:15 (ESV)

¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.

Commented [notes25]: Job 2:4-5 (ESV)

⁴ Then Satan answered the LORD and said, "Skin for skin! All that a man has he will give for his life. ⁵ But stretch out your hand and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse you to your face."

Commented [notes26]: John 8:46 (ESV)

⁴⁶ Which one of you convicts me of sin? If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me?

The ultimate proof of Jesus' divinity is His resurrection. People were raised from the dead by Jesus (Luke 7:14-15), but no one ever rose from death on their own other than Jesus. In one of Paul's sermons he declared, ³² *And we bring you the good news that what God promised to the fathers, ³³ this he has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus, as also it is written in the second Psalm, -'You are my Son, today I have begotten you.'* Acts 13:32-33 (ESV) This was the conclusive evidence for the Apostle Paul that Jesus was the Son of God. That power that raised Him declared Him to be the Son. We should not miss the fact that Paul teaches elsewhere that the power that raised Jesus is also at work in us (Ephesians 1:19-20).

Commented [notes27]: Luke 7:14-15 (ESV)

¹⁴ Then he came up and touched the bier, and the bearers stood still. And he said, "Young man, I say to you, arise."
¹⁵ And the dead man sat up and began to speak, and Jesus gave him to his mother.

The second Psalm and Daniel seven tell us that the Son is the One that will judge the earth (Psalm 2:9; Daniel 7:13-14). He is the one all will obey. He will rule over all. The Jews were right to call Him the Son of David, but only half right. He is also the Son of God (Proverbs 30:4). The proof of that is His holy life and resurrection from the dead.

Commented [notes28]: Ephesians 1:19-20 (ESV)

¹⁹ and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might ²⁰ that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places,

Commented [notes29]: Psalm 2:9 (ESV)

⁹ You shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. E

Commented [notes30]: Daniel 7:13-14 (ESV)

¹³ "I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him.

¹⁴ And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.

Commented [notes31]: Proverbs 30:4 (ESV)

⁴ Who has ascended to heaven and come down? Who has gathered the wind in his fists? Who has wrapped up the waters in a garment? Who has established all the ends of the earth? What is his name, and what is his son's name? Surely you know!

Commented [notes32]: John 3:16 (ESV)

¹⁶ "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

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,* Romans 1:5 (ESV) "We" in this verse could refer to the official apostles of Jesus or to all Christians. Let us consider it as addressed to the Romans and therefore to all believers. It is through the Son of God that we have received grace. You and I had no hope of anything but judgment. But God so loved the world that He sent His only Son (John 3:16). It wasn't because of anything we did. It was just love. It was a love that condescendingly stooped down to us and chose to love us. It wasn't because He knew we would respond to Him, for He sent His Son for the entire world. It was just unmerited love. Grace reached down to each of us and offered to pull us out of the mire of sin that destroys us and damns us to hell, and instead He made us children of God. Grace moved our hearts to reach out and take His hand. Grace has kept us from falling. Grace will keep us until we are home (Philippians 1:6).

Commented [notes33]: Philippians 1:6 (ESV)

⁶ And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

Through the Son we also receive apostleship. That is not to say we are one of the official 12, but that we are all called to be Christ's messengers by the way we live and the things we say. We are all fulltime apostles regardless of what our occupation happens to be. **We are all called to represent Christ in our sphere of influence** (1John 2:6).

Commented [notes34]: 1 John 2:6 (ESV)

⁶ whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.

Grace and apostleship are ours to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of His name among all the nations. Paul is using "obedience of the faith" as a way to say salvation. Obedience doesn't save us, but *if* we are saved, then Jesus is our Lord. That means we are obedient to the faith. True faith results in obedience to Christ (James 2:17).

Commented [notes35]: James 2:17 (ESV)

¹⁷ So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

We are saved to obey Him as Lord. We want all to know His lordship in their lives because that is the only way to live in Him. It is the only way to escape the wrath of

God, the judgment we deserve. The more people who live under His lordship, the more people will see that it is the best way to live. It is the joy and peace of the believer that invites others to know Jesus as Lord. "Christian" should be a respected title if we are truly living for the sake of His name wherever we are in this wide world. I believe we are in the age where there is a truly Christian witness in every nation on the planet. And that means the return of Christ is near (Matthew 24:14).

Someone might ask if you can be saved and not obey. There are no Christians who were saved and obeyed completely and totally from that point till the day of their death. Obedience of the faith is an increasing Christ likeness (2Corinthians 3:18). Christians can disobey God but they will be miserable doing so because they would be grieving the Spirit of God who lives in them. If they live in habitual disobedience, they have never known salvation. James tells us that there are those who deceive themselves (James 1:22). They go through the motions, but they never reined in their tongue. They do religious things, like going to church, praying, even witnessing to others, but they have never known obedience of the faith. "... merely calling Jesus Lord, even while doing seemingly important work in His name, is worthless unless those works are done from faith, are done in accord with His Word, and are directed and empowered by His Holy Spirit."¹

It is all for His name's sake. We don't live a Christian life for our self, although we certainly benefit from it. We don't call people to know Christ as Lord for their sake, though it is certainly the best thing for them. We do it for the glory of God. They should come to obedience of the faith for His glory. The grace of God is seen when a lost soul comes to Christ and His name is glorified.

⁶ including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ, Romans 1:6 (ESV) It is not just the lost that are called to obedience to the faith. It is all who belong to Jesus. We need this reminder because we so often take for granted the grace of God. We forget that people are looking to us to see Jesus, to know what it means to be a Christian. We take grace for granted because it is so freely given. So Paul reminds the Romans that they are called to obedience to the faith. Remember, that is what Jesus commanded us when He sent us to make disciples of all nations, "Teaching them to obey what I have commanded you." (Matthew 28:20) He commanded us to love God with our all and our neighbor as our self (Matthew 22:37-39).

Paul was called to be an official Apostle, as we saw in verse one. Here we are told that we are called to belong to Jesus Christ. To belong to him means that like Paul, we are His servants. Servants obey or they are disciplined. Now we must remember that our relationship with Christ is more than Master and slave. It is also Husband and wife (Ephesians 5:31-32). It is also Teacher and student as well as friend (John 15:15). We must not forget that we have been bought with His blood. We were in the slave market

Commented [notes36]: Matthew 24:14 (ESV)

¹⁴ And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

Commented [notes37]: 2 Corinthians 3:18 (ESV)

¹⁸ And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

Commented [notes38]: James 1:22 (ESV)

²² But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.

Commented [notes39]: MacArthur New Testament

Commentary, The - MacArthur New Testament Commentary - Romans 1-8.

Commented [notes40]: Matthew 28:20 (ESV)

²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Commented [notes41]: Matthew 22:37-39 (ESV)

³⁷ And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. ³⁸ This is the great and first commandment.

³⁹ And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

Commented [notes42]: Ephesians 5:31-32 (ESV)

³¹ "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh."

³² This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.

Commented [notes43]: John 15:15 (ESV)

¹⁵ No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.

of Satan. Satan demanded a high price to set us free, the blood of Jesus, which He willingly paid. Now He owns us (1Corinthians 7:22-23). We are called to belong to Jesus Christ. Too often we live as if we belonged to no one but ourselves. Elsewhere Paul writes, ²⁰ *for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.* 1 Corinthians 6:20 (ESV) Now if someone asks what your calling is, do you know the answer? You were called to belong to Jesus Christ. You are called to glorify God. That is true of every real Christian.

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.* Romans 1:7 (ESV) Unlike most of Paul's letters, he didn't get to the greeting and prayer until he had thoroughly introduced himself, his calling, his message, Jesus as human and divine, and reminded them of their calling and obligation. He reminds us that we are loved of God and the letter is to all who acknowledge that (Psalm 36:7).

The greeting adds another focus of our calling. We are called to be saints. It is really the same idea expressed earlier in a simpler term. Saint means to be set apart for God. Obedience to the faith is the same idea. We are God's possession so we are to live in obedience to our Lord. He will only ask us to do what is right and holy. Thus we are set apart, which means holy, for God's good purposes.

Grace and peace are Paul's typical greeting. As we saw in other letters, it is a combination of Hebrew and Greek ideas. Grace is a word Paul redeemed and made richer, the unmerited favor of God. That is what we wish for all our brothers and sisters in Christ, and for ourselves. We find the world offering grace; it only comes to us from God in Jesus.

Peace is the Hebrew shalom. It is the presence of every good thing in your life, health, prosperity, good relations, etc. Grace and peace together in one's life is better than anything this world can offer, even more than all the world has to offer. They are priceless. What would you give to have your life filled with grace and peace (James 4:14)? They are yours in Christ Jesus, but the only position He can hold in one's life is Lord. Is He your Lord?

Questions

- 1 How would you describe yourself?
- 2 What did Paul preach?
- 3 What are some Scriptures he might have used?
- 4 What does verse three tell us?
- 5 What does verse four tell us?
- 6 What expression does Paul use for salvation?
- 7 What have we received?
- 8 Why do we obey?

Commented [notes44]: 1 Corinthians 7:22-23 (ESV)

²² For he who was called in the Lord as a slave is a freedman of the Lord. Likewise he who was free when called is a slave of Christ.

²³ You were bought with a price; do not become slaves of men.

Commented [notes45]: Psalm 36:7 (ESV)

⁷ How precious is your steadfast love, O God! The children of mankind take refuge in the shadow of your wings.

Commented [notes46]: James 4:14 (ESV)

¹⁴ yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes.

- 9 What are we called to?
- 10 To whom do we belong?
- 11 What is a saint?