

The Promise and The Proof

Romans 1:1-7

Pastor Paul Anthes

Introduction: By the time Paul writes this letter, he has been trying to get to Rome for years. He has been all over the empire, but never to the capitol. He knows the church is planted there and thriving even with opposition and he believes he has vital information for their spiritual lives.

How did the church get there? Had Peter already gone there a founded it by 58 AD when Paul wrote? Is it conceivable that Paul would write to this church and not mention their Pastor even a single time in the entire letter? The most likely answer to this question is found in the events surrounding the day of Pentecost 25 years earlier. On that day, the Holy Spirit created the church with a mighty outpouring of signs and powerful preaching. Luke tells us

Acts 2:5 ⁵ there were Jews living in Jerusalem, devout men from every nation under heaven.

As the Apostles were controlled by the Holy Spirit and began to speak of God's awesome power and works, Acts tells us that the crowds.....

Acts 2:7-10 ⁷were amazed and astonished, saying, "Why, are not all these who are speaking Galileans? ⁸ "And how is it that we each hear *them* in our own language to which we were born? ⁹ "Parthians and Medes and Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰ Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts of Libya around Cyrene, and visitors from **Rome**, both Jews and proselytes,

So visitors from the entire empire....including Rome observed the sign for unbelievers that the Holy Spirit sent and then heard that first Gospel Sermon.....

Acts 2:41 ⁴¹So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls.

The pagan religion and government of Rome did its level best to snuff out the Christians but in spite of everything they continued to live a grow because it was a work of the Sovereign God and His Only Son who said....

Matthew 16:18 ¹⁸ "..... I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.

This fledgling church was founded by converts from Pentecost with little or no training in the Scriptures. They have been facing huge human obstacles in Rome....persecutions and rejections. Loss of standing in the community and business opportunities. This is exactly why Paul says....

Romans 1:11 ¹¹ I long to see you so that I may impart some spiritual gift to you, that you may be established;

But he has been sidetracked again and again. He is only 600 miles away in Corinth as he writes this, but still not able to get there, because he has a desperately needed offering for the church in Jerusalem that he must take back to them.

Romans 15:25-26 ²⁵ but now, I am going to Jerusalem serving the saints. ²⁶ For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem.

So Paul takes pen in hand and writes much of what he would have preferred to say in person. He is worried about this church and God has given him revelation that must be imparted to Christ's church. In retrospect we can clearly see the purpose of God's delaying hand.....NOW.....these truths have become the treasure of the ages and not just that small band of first century believers in Rome. Paul starts by introducing himself and giving the reasons why he should be heard and heeded.

Romans 1:1-7 Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called *as* an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, ² which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures, ³ concerning His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh, ⁴ who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord, ⁵ through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about *the* obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for His name's sake, ⁶ among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ; ⁷ to all who are beloved of God in Rome, called *as* saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Romans knew the basics of salvation. But Christ sent His apostolic Scripture writers to give them a deeper understanding. God believes that this deep understanding of the tragic condition of humanity and the Compassion and Grace of Christ are needed in every generation and every language. As different as men and cultures are....there is this common reality. Men are born estranged from God....and God is the source of all physical life and eternal spiritual life as well....and all men cherish life. All men want to live, be happy, have hope and joy and peace. This is universal and yet the world pounds and grinds humanity into dust and the grave. Satan spins the human condition saying it is God who does this to men, but this is exactly opposite. It is Satan and his world that pour misery and grief upon humanity. It is Jesus who came that we might have life and have it abundantly. Paul writes this introduction to encourage us to listen to the Scripture that is about to follow. It is from God and for our blessing.

Who is writing?.... It is Paul [1a]

Romans 1:1 Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called *as* an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God,

When we first encountered him, he was going by his Hebrew name. Saul of the NT shared a name with his famous ancestor from the tribe of Benjamin. There is no record that Christ changed Saul's name or any explanation for why he became Paul by the time

he began to preach and write. The most likely reason is that he had both names. Born a Roman citizen into Jewish family it would not be surprising that he also had a Roman name. Paulos...meaning “small” or “humble.” The Romans epitomized the Gentile nations to which Paul had a specific calling.

Ephesians 3:8 ⁸ To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ,

Who he is...a slave [1b]: When given the chance to say who he is, Paul describes himself as a slave belonging to Jesus. To put this another way...Paul says that Jesus is his Lord and Master. A slave’s life is entirely devoted to his master. His time and possessions ultimately belong to his master who in turn provides everything for his slave. Greek uses word order to stress importance so Paul calls his master Christ Jesus or “Messiah Jesus.”

What is Paul’s vocation....he was called as an Apostle [1c]: The word vocation in English comes from the word “calling.” So what do we have going on here? Paul has stated that he is a slave or “bond-servant” as some translations have it. But he immediately says that he is an apostle. So which is it? It is both. Paul has totally devoted and subjected his life to the Messiah Jesus. Jesus is Lord and as such directs Paul and orders his activities. By putting it this way, Paul makes it clear that he is only an apostle because his Master has tasked him with being one. Paul made this explanation of his apostleship to the Corinthians....

1 Corinthians 15:9-10 I am the least of the apostles, and not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. ¹⁰ But by the grace of God I am what I am,

What his life’s purpose is....the gospel [1d]: An Apostle is technically “one who is sent.” It is not strictly a religious word, but it certainly became one in the case of the Apostles of Christ. Jesus Himself sent them into the world to make disciples of every nation. It is not enough just to be sent. Christ sent Paul with a mission which was the gospel. Gospel means good news. But there are many things that are in fact....good news. Let me illustrate:

Suppose you went to the store for some ice cream and on the way you realized that you couldn’t decide between two flavors, but when you got there you found out that there was a buy one get one free sale...would that be good news?

What if your plane experienced mechanical problems and could not take off for two days, but they had to land in Hawaii and the airline decided to put you in a luxury hotel for two days and give you \$1000 and a free ticket for your trouble....would that be good news?

Suppose your child did not come home from school and you searched frantically for them until late that night....only to find them safe and sound at a friend’s....would that be good news?

Here is the point! The meaning of the “good news” depends dramatically on how bad the bad news is? Romans starts with some stunningly bad news about the spiritual,

emotional and physical condition of mankind. It is the worst possible news, followed by the Greatest Possible News. One of the reasons why Christians do not cherish their Savior and their place as sons of God is because they have little or no idea how hopeless we are apart from Christ. God is going to remedy that right at the outset of this letter.

What is the origin of the Gospel....the prophets of the OT [2]

Romans 1:2 ² which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures,

Did Paul make up this good news that he is promising to bring to them? He says “NO WAY!” It was promised by the prophets in the OT. So...you are asking....where in the prophets does God reveal the gospel? Follow me carefully now....Scripture says that the Prophets promised the gospel ...they did not revealed it! It is the New Testament, the Apostles and the church that God appointed to reveal it. God had always promised a Messiah, but now He has been revealed and is being proclaimed.

Colossians 1:25-27 ²⁵ I was made a minister according to the stewardship from God bestowed on me for your benefit, so that I might fully carry out the *preaching of* the word of God, ²⁶ *that is*, the **mystery** which has been hidden from the *past* ages and generations, but has now been manifested to His saints, ²⁷ to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this **mystery** among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

1 Peter 1:18-21 ⁸ knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, ¹⁹ but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, *the blood* of Christ. ²⁰ For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared **in these last** times for the sake of you ²¹ who through Him are believers in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.

What the gospel is all about....God's own Son [3]

Romans 1:3 ³ concerning His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh,

The Gospel is not doctrine! Believing a doctrine or a teaching or a theology will not save you. This is a serious mis-understanding of saving faith. It is Christ who saves you. The Eternal Son, who was with God in the beginning and was God. That Son left heaven for Mary's womb...was born and lived without sin and then died a sinners death on your behalf. Romans is a book about Christ. It exalts Christ and not doctrine. Oh yes!! I can find some doctrines in this book and lots of things to hang my faith on, but the reality is that it is Christ alone who bore your sins and saving faith mean this....You know Christ died for you personally and you entrust Him with your physical and eternal life.

How can we know who that is....He descended from David: Why should anyone believe that Jesus was the Christ? Paul mentions just one small evidence here. The prophets had declared that the Messiah....THE CHRIST.....would be a human descendent of David. He would be heir to David's throne.

Psalm 132:11 ¹¹ The LORD has sworn to David A truth from which He will not turn back: "Of the fruit of your body I will set upon your throne.

The Messiah had to come down through a particular line. All that was predicted. David was just the last step in the authentication process.

- He had to come through Seth the righteous replacement for Able and not Cain.
- The Messiah would come through Abraham for no reason except that it was God's purpose to chose him.

Galatians 3:16 ¹⁶ Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his **seed**. He does not say, "And to seeds," as *referring* to many, but *rather* to one, "And to your **seed**," that is, Christ.

- The Christ would descend through Abraham's legitimate heir and not Ishmael.

Genesis 17:19-21 ¹⁹ Sarah your wife will bear you a son, and you shall call his name **Isaac**; and I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him. ²⁰ "As for Ishmael, I have heard you; behold, I will bless him, and will make him fruitful and will multiply him exceedingly. He shall become the father of twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation. ²¹ "But My covenant I will establish with **Isaac**, whom Sarah will bear to you at this season next year."

- He would come from the younger of Isaac's twins and not the predictable older one.

Genesis 25:23 ²³ The LORD said to her, "Two nations are in your womb; And two peoples will be separated from your body; And one people shall be stronger than the other; And the older shall **serve the younger**."

- He would come through one son of Jacob only...Judah

Psalm 78:67-68 ⁶⁷ He also rejected the tent of Joseph, And did not choose the tribe of Ephraim, ⁶⁸ But chose the **tribe of Judah**, Mount Zion which He loved.

- Then through one descendent of Judah... Jesse

Isaiah 11:1-2 Then a shoot will spring from the stem of **Jesse**, And a branch from his roots will bear fruit. ² The Spirit of the LORD will rest on Him, The spirit of wisdom and understanding, The spirit of counsel and strength, The spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.

- And finally through the last son...not the first of Jesse....David

Psalm 89:3-4 ³ "I have made a covenant with My chosen; I have sworn to David My servant, ⁴ I will establish your seed forever And build up your throne to all generations."

But how can we be sure he was God's Son.....He rose from the dead [4]

Romans 1:4 ⁴ who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord,

Who was declared the Son of God: The word "declared" means to clearly mark out or designate. In other words...Jesus had the human credentials but look what happened to Him. He was rejected and killed by the very people that should have embraced Him. The Jews had been given all these prophecies that pointed like a laser to Jesus as their Messiah. He spoke like no man ever spoke and did things that only God could do. He healed everyone, not most. He controlled nature and made food out of thin air. He raised people from the dead. But in the end they killed Him like a filthy criminal and would have thrown His body in a potter's field had not God the Father intervened. Why should we believe that a human person who ends up like that is actually the Son of God?

John 2:18-21 ¹⁸ The Jews then said to Him, "What sign do You show us as your authority for doing these things?" ¹⁹ Jesus answered them, "**Destroy this temple**, and in three days I will raise it up." ²⁰ The Jews then said, "It took forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?" ²¹ But He was speaking of the temple of His body.

Matthew 12:38-41 ³⁸ Then some of the scribes and Pharisees said to Him, "Teacher, we want to see a sign from You." ³⁹ But He answered and said to them, "An evil and adulterous generation craves for a sign; and *yet* no sign will be given to it but the sign of **Jonah** the prophet; ⁴⁰ for just as **JONAH WAS THREE DAYS AND THREE NIGHTS IN THE BELLY OF THE SEA MONSTER**, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. ⁴¹ "The men of Nineveh will stand up with this generation at the judgment, and will condemn it because they repented at the preaching of **Jonah**; and behold, something greater than **Jonah** is here.

With power: Jesus was on the earth in humility until the resurrection. Now He assumes that title with power and not with humility. There was nothing lowly or humble about Him when He appeared to John on Patmos...

Revelation 1:12-18 ¹² Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands; ¹³ and in the middle of the lampstands *I saw* one like a son of man, clothed in a robe reaching to the feet, and girded across His chest with a golden sash. ¹⁴ His head and His hair were white like white wool, like snow; and His eyes were like a flame of fire. ¹⁵ His feet *were* like burnished bronze, when it has been made to glow in a furnace, and His voice *was* like the sound of many waters. ¹⁶ In His right hand He held seven stars, and out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword; and His face was like the sun shining in its strength. ¹⁷ When I saw Him, I fell at His feet like a dead man. And He placed His right hand on me, saying, "Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, ¹⁸ and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades.

Paul described the entire cycle to the Philippians in chapter two of that epistle.

Philippians 2:5-11 ⁵ Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, *and* being made in the likeness of men. ⁸ Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. ⁹ For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, ¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

This is POWER! Omniscient, Omnipresent Omnipotence! The Resurrection changed everything about who Christ appeared and behaved.

According to the Spirit of holiness: Descendent of David was according to the Flesh. It was a part of Christ's human credentials and they were important. The resurrection from the dead definitively forms Christ's Divine credentials. Douglas Moo explains...

"In Jesus' earthly life [His life "in the realm of the flesh'], He was the Davidic seed, the Messiah, but while true and valuable, this does not tell the whole story. For Christians, Jesus is also, in "the realm of the Spirit," the powerful, life-giving Son of God."

Jesus Christ our Lord: There is no better title for our Savior than this. He is Jesus the Son of David, Christ the Son of God and He is our Master. His Earthly life fulfilled the promise of the Prophets and His resurrection provided the proof that He was the Eternal Son of the Living God.

Why is Paul preaching....to bring about faith in Christ Alone for His Glory [5]

Romans 1:5 ⁵ through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about *the* obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for His name's sake,

Through whom we have received grace and apostleship: Paul returns at the end of this introduction to his explanation of who he is and why he is writing. It is because of Christ that Paul has received grace.

1 Timothy 1:13-15 ¹³ even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor. Yet **I was shown** mercy because I acted ignorantly in unbelief; ¹⁴ and the grace of our Lord was more than abundant, with the faith and love which are *found* in Christ Jesus. ¹⁵ It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost *of all*.

Every believer is saved by Grace. As we are about to see in the following chapters....humanity stands condemned because it denies its creator and rejects His free offer of salvation. God acts graciously and mercifully to save.

Ephesians 2:4-5 ⁴ But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),

To bring about *the* obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for His name's sake: Paul is sent by His master to call people to a true saving faith and this is an obedient faith. Christ cannot be trusted only as Savior, because He is also Lord. He owns us and is our physical and spiritual life giver. To object to that reality and to refuse to trust Him as Lord is to not believe in the true Christ,

This does not mean and never has that God requires perfect obedience. We are not saved in any way by our works. It does mean that faith that saves us is trust in one we acknowledge to be our Lord. Trust in the one we know has the power of our lives in His hands and is worthy to be obeyed by us. The preaching of Christ is a call to trust Him fully with your life. It is a call to obedient faith no matter how imperfectly we respond.

CONCLUSION: These Roman believers are among the called. They were called, not for their own benefit alone, although believers certainly benefit in every way from being united with Christ. They were called for Christ's name sake! They along with us are called to Glorify Christ in the world by trusting in Him fully.

Romans 1:6 ⁶ among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ;

These verses reveal that Christ Jesus is the Gospel Good News. Paul makes it abundantly clear that he is in awe of Christ and is planning on sharing it along with his awesome knowledge of Scripture with with us.

Romans 1:7 ⁷ to all who are beloved of God in Rome, called *as* saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Grace is favor we do not deserve and cannot earn. And peace is the most blessed state of a person's soul and mind. Romans is brimming with both because it is overflowing with the truth about your spiritual state [grace] and the willingness of your Lord Jesus Christ to save you. [peace] Please as God to increase your understanding of your own sin and Christ's astounding willingness to love you and take your punishment.

Ephesians 1:16-23 ¹⁶ I do not cease giving thanks for you, while making mention *of you* in my prayers; ¹⁷ that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him. ¹⁸ *I pray that* the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, ¹⁹ and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. *These are* in accordance with the working of the strength of His might ²⁰ which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly *places*, ²¹ far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. ²² And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, ²³ which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.