

Romans – Session #2

This morning we turn to chapter one of Paul's monumental letter to the Romans. Lets read 1:1-15

Letters in antiquity followed a standard conventional form. Just like today when we are writing a letter to somebody, it begins with the date, the address of the individual, followed by Dear (Name). Even though the person we are writing may be our worst enemy, it is customary to address the person as: Dear (Name).

In Antiquity the standard form was:

Name (Romans 1:1) it begins: "Paul"

Then it gives the name of the person/persons being addressed: (Romans 1:7) – "to all God's beloved in Rome"

Then there would be a little prayer: (Romans 1:7) – "grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ".

In Romans, Paul extends the opening to make his theological teachings known. So in verse one of chapter one, Paul defines who he is, in a long introduction about who Jesus is and who he is:

1. "A servant of Jesus Christ"
2. "set apart for the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures".
3. "the gospel concerning his son, designated Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his Resurrection from the dead."
4. "Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom we have received grace and apostleship"
5. "To bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all nations, including yourselves who are called to belong to Jesus Christ"

So Paul begins Romans by establishing his relationship to Jesus Christ and to the Gospel. Of particular note about Romans is that Paul in most of his Epistles – associates others with his letter. Look at the beginning of I Corinthians – "Paul and Sosthenes", II Corinthians – "Paul and Timothy", Galatians – "Paul and all the brethren that are with me", Philippians – "Paul and Timothy", Colossians – "Paul and Timothy", I Thessalonians – "Paul, Sylvanus and Timothy", II Thessalonians – "Paul, Sylvanus and Timothy".

They all begin with the indication that the letter is written from Paul and the others mentioned. In Romans there are no other names. Romans begins with just "Paul". Why? Because Paul wants people to know that this letter is a reflection of only his thoughts and theology. Romans is Paul's work, Paul's thoughts. That is how important the letter was in Paul's own mind.

Vs. 1 – "a servant of Jesus Christ". The Greek word translated "servant" is *doulos* – and it literally means "slave of Jesus Christ". Paul is implying that Jesus is his master and Lord. Paul submits with utter devotion. Paul belongs to Jesus Christ.

Vs. 1 – Paul uses the messianic term "Christ" to describe Jesus and who Jesus truly is. In the New Testament, the word "Christ" is used 529 times. Of those, Paul uses it 379 times, and 65 of those are used in Romans. Remember, Paul is written before any of the Gospels, so Paul is responsible for proclaiming that Jesus is the Messiah. The highest number of usage in the non Pauline Epistles is 25 times in the Book of Acts, which was written by St. Luke. So we owe it to St. Paul that we call our Lord, "Jesus Christ"

Vs. 1 – "Called to be an apostle" - by saying called to be an apostle, Paul is implying that he did not choose to become an apostle. He was chosen by God on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1-22). Saul, the pharisee of the Jews, became Paul,

the apostle to the Gentiles by God's divine will and choosing. I wonder if that is how you feel about your relationship with God? Who chose whom? For what purpose? Paul is clearly not a self-proclaimed and self-appointed apostle. He was not chosen by men, by a committee who saw the virtue in him. He was in his words: "Called to be an apostle".

Of course Paul and we all have a choice to make, we must respond to God's calling. "yes" or "no thanks God". An apostle means literally – "a sent one". An apostle is sent with a message to proclaim. We are all of necessity a messenger. Every day the way we live, the way we speak, sends a message to others. The real question for us is – What message are we sending? To our children, to our co-workers, to our neighbors, and to strangers? We all are evangelists, we cannot help but be. If you feel you are "called by God" and "sent by God", you will share the message of Jesus Christ with the world.

Vs. 1 – "set apart for the Gospel of God" Paul is saying he has been called and set apart for the holiest of all callings and tasks – to proclaim the Gospel, the "Good News" of salvation through Jesus death on the cross and resurrection. The word "Gospel" is another word we owe credit to Paul for emphasizing. The word Gospel is used 60 times in Paul's Epistles and only 16 other times in the New Testament. Paul uses the word Gospel in every one of his 13 letters, except Titus.

Vs. 2 – Paul's emphasis on the divine is stated by Paul's assertion that the gift of Jesus Christ was promised beforehand by the writings of the prophets. With the Incarnation of Jesus, God has fulfilled what he had promised. Paul in vs. 2 states that the prophets are "HIS" prophets. The prophets belong to God. Their message is found in the sacred Holy Scriptures. The Gospel is the fulfillment of the Holy Scriptures of the Old Testament.

Vs. 3 – "The Gospel concerning his Son" – it points us to Jesus, the one who plays the central role in God's plan of salvation. "who was descended from David" – That the Messiah would be a descendant of David is taught in the Old Testament – Isaiah 11:1, Isaiah 11:10, Jeremiah 23:5-6, Ezekiel 34:23-24. Because Jesus comes as a descendant of David, Jesus is called "the son of David" 12 times. Eight times in Matthew's Gospel, 2 times in Mark's Gospel, and 2 times in Luke's Gospel. Paul, in Romans only mentions Jesus being from the Davidic line this one time, in vs. 3.

Vs. 3 – "according to his flesh" is Paul's way of saying Jesus is fully human, fully a man. Born to Joseph and Mary of the lineage of David. But this is only a reflection of his human nature. He is also the Son of God, and fully divine. Jesus has the dual nature of being fully human and fully divine at the same time.

Vs. 4 – "Jesus is designated the Son of God in power, according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection of the dead" – Jesus preferred to refer to himself as "the Son of Man". He uses the phrase "Son of God" to describe himself only two times – Matthew 27:43 and John 10:36. The early church much preferred to call Jesus – the Son of God. "through the spirit of holiness" in vs. 4 may be referring to Jesus own spirit, or it may be referring to the Holy Spirit, it is ambiguous in the Greek text. "By his resurrection from the dead" - For Paul it is the resurrection that sets Jesus apart as the Son of God in power. For Paul, the resurrection of Jesus is the beginning of the resurrection of the dead. In I Corinthians 15:20 Paul writes that Jesus: "is the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep" Paul is saying that Jesus resurrection is not an isolated event in history, it has eternal consequences for our lives. We too will triumph over death if only we believe. Paul concludes vs 4 with the words which tell us who he really believes Jesus is: Jesus Christ **our Lord**. Paul uses the title "Lord" 275 times (out of the 718 total in the N. T.)

Vs. 5 – "through him we have received grace and apostleship" - Paul is saying that grace and his apostolic ministry both come through Jesus Christ. They do not come from human achievement – they are a gift from God. The word "grace", is a predominantly Pauline word. It is used 155 times in the N.T. and 100 of those times are by St. Paul. Grace is used 24 times in Romans, the most of any of his Epistles. The word grace carries the connotation in Greek – "that which causes joy!". We still use this association today of the word grace and joy. We say a ballerina moves "gracefully" across the stage. Or we say so and so (Macy!) has great social "graces". In both cases we are saying they bring us joy by their joyous spirit. In a Christian context nothing brings us such great joy as our contemplating the saving act of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. He freely brings about our salvation without any contribution from our side. God's grace/not our works, saves us. God's grace is completely unearned and unmerited. This is sheer joy is it not? "By grace you have been

saved" (Ephesians 2:8). In vs. 5 of Romans, the grace of God has a purpose. It is totally free, but God saves us for a calling and a task. Namely "apostleship to bring about obedience of faith for the sake of His name among all nations, including yourselves (the Romans) who are called to belong to Jesus Christ."

God's grace is not offered to us simply for our eternal enjoyment, as wonderful as that is. It is offered to us with a commitment attached. The word "obedience" is a very strong statement. Paul is saying we do not have an option. We are called to the obedience of faith. God's grace demands our obedience. For the "sake of his name", we respond to God's grace, as a proper response to what He has done for us.