

An Apostle By Calling

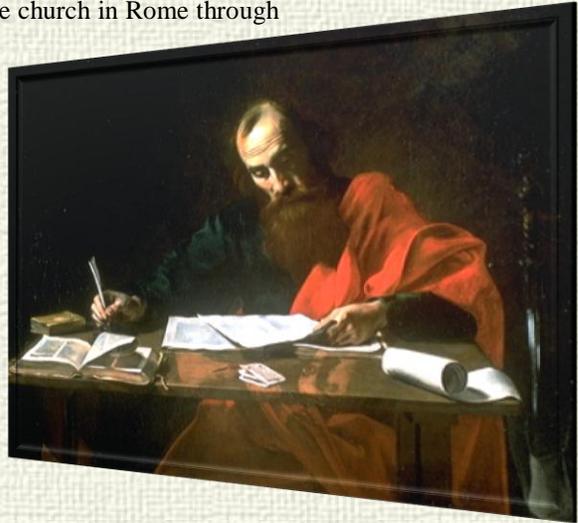
[Romans 1:1, 5-7](#)



Paul is writing to the Romans because he wants to use Rome as a base of operations to reach the western Mediterranean. I think Paul goes into so much theology in Romans because he wants them to understand the Jewishness of the Gospel and not despise their Jewish brothers. Paul wanted to unify the church in Rome through doctrine, so that the church would be a strong base for world evangelism.

This morning we actually start to study the book of Romans. The first section of this book is [1:1-17](#), which is a basic introduction. This is the longest introduction of Paul. This introduction divides into three parts: 1-7 salutation, 8-15 is about Paul's travel plans and in 16-17, Paul draws it all together.

The salutation, which is the longest salutation in Paul's epistles, identifies the writer (v.1), introduces the subject of the letter (vv. 2-5), and greets the original readers (vv. 6-7). The entire thrust of the 16 Chapters of Romans is condensed into the first 7 verses. Paul was so thrilled about what he was about to say that he couldn't wait to say it. So he summarizes the whole book in the first 7 verses.



In the Greek language the first seven verses are all one long sentence. You can't really tell that in English because the translators have broken it up into smaller parts, but in the original, it's all one sentence—176 words in all—starting with *“Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ,”* in verse 1 and ending with *“From God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ”* in verse 7.

The letter to the Romans is framed by the opening salutation (1:1-7) and the closing doxology ([16:25-27](#)). These two texts call attention to the same themes:

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

Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past, Romans 16:25 NASB

Paul had been called as an apostle to preach the gospel in chapter 1 and in chapter 16 he calls it *“my gospel”*. This gospel that Paul preaches centers on Jesus:

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

Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past, Romans 16:25 NASB

Paul tells us that the gospel that he preaches is in fulfillment of the Hebrew Scriptures:

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

but now is manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all the nations, leading to obedience of faith; Romans 16:26 NASB

Paul says that the goal of his preaching is to bring about the obedience of faith:

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

but now is manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all the nations, leading to obedience of faith; Romans 16:26 NASB

So Paul bracket's the book with the gospel of Jesus that is to bring about the obedience of faith to all nations. Let's look at verse one:

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

Paul starts out by telling us three things about himself. He tells us that he is a:

1. Slave of Christ Jesus
2. He is an apostle by calling
3. He is set apart for the gospel of God.

We'll look at each of these, but notice how he starts:

PAUL—let's stop right there for a moment. We know quite a bit about Paul from our study of Acts but let me just hit a few facts for those who weren't with us in that study.

Paul was one of the greatest minds and one of the sharpest intellects the human race has ever produced. Two Thousand years after Paul wrote Romans, the Book is still accepted as one of the masterpieces of logic in human literature. In this man converged the three great cultures of his time. He was a Hebrew, a fact which he strongly emphasizes in his letter to the Philippians with the phrase, **"a Hebrew of the Hebrews."** Paul was proud of his heritage. He was born and reared in the City of **Tarsus**, a great university center, the heart of Greek culture, and was, in addition, a freeborn **Roman citizen**. Only about one in five persons was a citizen of Rome in Paul's day, and many of those purchased this citizenship at great price.

The Apostle Paul is one of the central figures in the New Testament. There have been countless volumes written about Paul himself. Here's a man whose life is worthy of consideration. We feel the impact of this man's life down to our own day 2,000 years later. This man has made an impact on the world.

If you look in the front of your Bible in the index and look under the New Testament you'll see that after you move through the gospels — Matthew, Mark, Luke and John — you come to the book of Acts. The book of Acts was written by Luke. Then comes the book of Romans, which was written by Paul. The following letters were also were written by Paul: 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, and Philemon. All are identified within the letter as written by Paul. Some people would add the book of Hebrews, but the author of Hebrews is not stated. But these 13 books, beginning with Romans and running through Philemon, are all credited in the New Testament to the Apostle Paul. Now you see something of the impact he has had in the work that God is doing in the world right down to our day. A significant portion of what we have as God's word was penned by Paul.

Old Testament		New Testament	
Leviticus	Num.	Matthew	Matt.
Numbers	Deut.	Mark	Mark
Deuteronomy	Josh.	Luke	Luke
Joshua	Judg.	John	John
Judges	Ruth	Acts	Acts
Ruth	1 Sam.	Romans	Rom.
1 Samuel	2 Sam.	1 Corinthians	1 Cor.
2 Samuel	1 Kin.	2 Corinthians	2 Cor.
1 Kings	2 Kin.	Galatians	Gal.
2 Kings	1 Chr.	Ephesians	Eph.
1 Chronicles	2 Chr.	Philippians	Phil.
2 Chronicles	Ezra	Colossians	Col.
Ezra	Neh.	1 Thessalonians	1 Thess.
Nehemiah	Esth.	2 Thessalonians	2 Thess.
Esther	Job	1 Timothy	1 Tim.
Job	Ps.	2 Timothy	2 Tim.
Psalms	Prov.	Titus	Titus
Proverbs	Eccl.	Philemon	Philem.
Ecclesiastes	Song	Hebrews	Heb.
Song of Solomon	Is.	James	James
Isaiah	Jer.	1 Peter	1 Pet.
Jeremiah	Lam.	2 Peter	2 Pet.
Lamentation	Ezek.	1 John	1 John
Ezekiel	Dan.	2 John	2 John
Daniel	Hos.	3 John	3 John
Hosea	Joel	Jude	Jude
Joel	Amos	Revelation	Rev.
Amos	Obad.		
Obadiah	Jon.		
Jonah	Mic.		

Paul calls himself a **“BOND-SERVANT of Jesus Christ”**—this is the Greek word *doulos*, which conveys the idea of *ownership, possession, dependency, subjection, loyalty*. It also conveys the idea of *willing service, not a forced service*. He is a slave, but he is a slave by choice. Paul has willingly made himself a slave of Jesus Christ to do His will.

“So then, I thought to myself that I had to do many things hostile to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Acts 26:9 NASB

He was totally opposed to Christ and now he says that he is His slave. Let me see if I can give you a Jewish context for Paul's thinking. In Exodus chapter 21, we find out about the servant master relationship among God's people as God gives some laws to them.

“If you buy a Hebrew slave, he shall serve for six years; but on the seventh he shall go out as a free man without payment. Exodus 21:2 NASB

He served a master for six years. The master has loved him, provided for him, been kind to him and helped him—all the things that you would look for. Now the day comes that he is to be set free.

“But if the slave plainly says, 'I love my master, my wife and my children; I will not go out as a free man,' then his master shall bring him to God, then he shall bring him to the door or the doorpost. And his master shall pierce his ear with an awl; and he shall serve him permanently. Exodus 21:5-6 NASB

In other words, if the servant says I don't serve because I have to, I don't serve because I'm forced to, I don't serve because I'm paid to, I don't serve because I'm afraid not to, I serve because I love my master,, therefore I'll never go free. He became known as a bonds slave.

You were bought with a price; do not become slaves of men. 1 Corinthians 7:23 NASB

In other words, Christians are slaves of Christ because Jesus bought us by dying for us, and therefore He owns us.

Paul was a Hebrew man with all of the traditions of a Hebrew man. He was very acquainted with the Scriptures. He was skilled in them. And so, he would know all about what it means to be a servant of the Lord God. He would have remembered that this is something that is said of Abraham. It is something that is said of Moses. It is something that is said of Joshua. It is something that is said of David. They were said to be servants of Yahweh.

Paul says that he is a servant, not of the Lord, but of Jesus Christ. It's obvious that he has a view of him that makes the Son a majestic being. He is more than a man. No Hebrew man would want to be the servant of any other person than the Lord God. And so, in this very expression **“a bond-servant of Jesus Christ”** the apostle confesses the majesty of the Son of God.

One thing that is characteristic of comments concerning the Lord Jesus Christ is that they frequently say of him that he was a very good man. And if you ask the ordinary church-goer who is Jesus Christ, many of them would take that view, that he was a very good man, or a very unusual man, or even a divine kind of man. But, the idea that he was just as much God as the Father is God that is strange to them. But Paul serves Jesus because Jesus is Lord.

What Paul understood about his calling, we need to realize about our calling as well. We've all been called to be slaves of Jesus Christ as we humbly submit ourselves to the King.

So Paul tells us that he was a bond-slave of Jesus Christ and then he tells us that he was, **“CALLED AS AN APOSTLE”**—this is a verbal adjective, and it would be better to translate it, **“an apostle by calling.”** Even a casual reading of the account of the conversion of Saul will reveal, Paul was not an apostle of Jesus Christ by his own initiative. Rather, he was an apostle by divine appointment. God spoke to him from heaven. God interrupted him while he was on his way to kill Christians. God, in effect, spoke to him in sovereign grace and transformed him, turned him around.

The apostolic title gave authority to Paul's letter. The New Testament reserves that title for only a few who met the strictest qualifications. The noun **“apostle”** literally means **“sent out one”** or **“one sent out authoritatively”**. Apostle is used in a general sense, in some passages in the New Testament, of a person who is sent someplace. But in its technical sense, it refers to those we know as “the Apostles” - particularly the 12 and Paul. These were men selected by God to have a unique ministry

in establishing the church. They were men who had to have seen Jesus Christ after his resurrection from the dead ([Acts 1:21-22](#)). Some at Corinth were challenging whether Paul was an apostle. Paul's response was:

Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord? 1 Corinthians 9:1 NASB

You had to have seen Jesus Christ after His resurrection so that you could be an eyewitness. Paul is the last of the apostles. 1 Corinthians, chapter 15 opens with Paul recounting the post-resurrection appearances of Christ. Then Paul concludes that list by saying:

and last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also. 1 Corinthians 15:8 NASB

"I'm a unique case," Paul said. "I'm the last of the apostles. But He did appear to me, and that happened on the Damascus road." The apostles had the ability to perform miracles:

The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with all perseverance, by signs and wonders and miracles. 2 Corinthians 12:12 NASB

It was necessary that the apostles could do signs, wonders, and miracles, because they also were the recipients of new revelations from God.

When Paul says that he is an apostle of Jesus Christ, he is one who represents Jesus Christ. He is in a unique position. It is a position of authority. He is sent from God to speak for God. You understand that he is not just going to give one opinion among many opinions. He is going to render God's verdict on the issues at hand, because he is an apostle. He has that position.

So Paul tells us that he is "a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, he is an apostle by calling and he is *“set apart for the gospel of God”*. The word *“set apart”* is the verb *aphorizo* from *horizo* which means: *“to mark off by boundaries, to limit, separate”* and *apo* which means *“off from”*. The compound verb means: *“to mark off from others by boundaries, to appoint, to set one apart from some purpose.”* So Paul was marked off by boundaries for the gospel of God.

When did that happen i.e. being set apart for the gospel of God?

But when God, who had set me apart even from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, was pleased Galatians 1:15 NASB

This means that before Paul was bought as a slave, and before he was called on the Damascus road, and before he was born, God set him apart for the gospel of God. This is an astonishing thing when you realize the pathway that led from the womb to the Damascus road, namely, Paul's unbelief and persecution of the church.

I said earlier that in verses 1-7 Paul introduces himself and his gospel and his mission. Paul introduces himself in verse 1 but he is telling us that all he is is because of God. God bought him by the death of his Son, God called him to be an apostle, God set him apart from before he was born. As I said last week this letter is all about God. Paul is who he is because of God.

But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me. 1 Corinthians 15:10 NASB

Paul says that he is set apart for the *“gospel of God”*. The mention of the gospel causes Paul to elaborate on the gospel in verses 2-4. We are going to skip over these today and pick them up next week. We are going to jump to verses 5-7.

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

Paul begins by telling us that he is what he is because of Jesus. The *“through whom”* here is referring back to *“Jesus Christ our Lord”* from the end of verse 4. The plural *“we”* here is epistolary, with the meaning “I”. Paul is referring to his own grace of apostleship. The steady repetition of the first person singular in verses 8-16 suggests that Paul was thinking of his own apostolic ministry in verse 5.

Think about it. I was Saul of Tarsus, a blasphemer, and injurious person and a persecutor and murder of Christians and now here I am writing to you. How is this possible? Grace—unmerited, unearned favor. It was because of the sovereign grace of God that Paul received the grace of apostleship.

It was of the utmost importance that Paul's authority as an apostle be acknowledged in the church. He here repeats the assertion that he received his office from the risen Lord as a grace gift.

Paul's apostleship was directed to the Gentiles, "**among all the Gentiles**"—Gentiles is the Greek word *ethnos*, from which we get our English word "ethnic." The literal meaning is "**nations**." Paul was called directly by Jesus Christ to preach the gospel to the nations. In our terminology, Paul was a Jewish Christian who was serving as the very first foreign missionary. Paul's mission field was the nations of the world.

But on the contrary, seeing that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been to the circumcised Galatians 2:7 NASB

"**Uncircumcised**" is the non-Jewish. Paul was the apostle to the Nations and his calling was to "**bring about the obedience of faith**." The significance of the genitive *pistis*, (of faith) is disputed. Some take it as a subjective genitive giving it the sense of obedience that come from faith. It can also be taken as an appositional construction and should be translated as "**the obedience that is faith**." Acceptance of the gospel in faith can be described as an act of obedience.

However, they did not all heed the good news; for Isaiah says, "LORD, WHO HAS BELIEVED OUR REPORT?" Romans 10:16 NASB

The word "**heed**" is the Greek word *hupakouo*, **which means to obey**. Paul uses it four times in Romans and the other three are all translated obey. The parallelism of the two lines reveals that disobedience consists in failure to believe.

Therefore they said to Him, "What shall we do, so that we may work the works of God?" Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent." John 6:28-29 NASB

It is an act of obedience to God to believe in His Son.

Many lordship salvationists use this phrase "**obedience of faith**" to enforce their view of commitment salvation. My favorite Lordship writer John MacArthur writes, "**The result of faith is obedience. Show me someone who says he believes in Christ and lives a life of disobedience and I'll show you someone who is not redeemed.**"

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.' "This is the great and foremost commandment. "The second is like it, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.' Matthew 22:37-39 NASB

Do you know anyone who lives this out? Not to live like this is disobedience, which according to MacArthur, means you are not redeemed. Don't we all live in some disobedience? If so how much is acceptable?

For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous. Romans 5:19 NASB

I am seen by God as righteous because of Jesus Christ, I am in Christ.

"**For His names sake**"—the ultimate reason for Paul's mission to the Gentiles was not the salvation of the Gentiles but "for His name's sake". The gospel is first and last about God. Paul closes the letter with these words:

to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be the glory forever. Amen. Romans 16:27 NASB

Paul's undergirding motivation for his mission is that Jesus Christ and God the Father will be glorified through his proclamation of the gospel.

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

In verses 6-7 Paul brings his words directly to bear upon the people to whom he is writing (and by implication, all Christians!). It is so important that we realize what we are as Christians.

The *“you”* is the Christians at Rome. He says that they are *“the called of Jesus Christ”*—this is a very significant statement. *“Called”* here is the Greek word *kletos*, which means: *“invited, appointed.”* We could have translated this, called to belong to Jesus Christ. The only reason that any of us come to Christ is because we are called. This calling is effectual, everyone who He calls comes:

“No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day.
John 6:44 NASB

The word *“draw”* here is *helkuo*, which means: *“to draw by irresistible superiority.”* None of us would ever come to Christ unless we were called. So how is it that we are called? He tells us in verse 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. Romans 1:7 NASB

This continues the thought of verse 1, verses 2-6 being somewhat parenthetical. The first thing we need to understand is that we are *“beloved of God”*. We are what we are because of the love of God. *“Beloved”* is never used in the New Testament for lost people. Never, not one time. But it is always used for the family of God. It is a family word.

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.
Romans 5:8 NASB

Christ paid our sin debt and made us righteous because He loves us. We are Christians for one reason only and that is that God has set His love upon us. Do you realize that God loves you as much as He loves Jesus?

Then Paul says we are *“called as saints”*—the Christians at Rome were saints. *“Saint”* is probably a very familiar word to you, but it's often understood wrongly by many people. If someone were to ask you if you were a saint, what would you tell them? You might be a little afraid to answer the question because the term *“saint”* is loaded by so much that is not representative of its biblical meaning. Most people don't think of the term in its New Testament sense. We might be reluctant to say, *“I'm a saint”* because we live under the assumption that someone who is a saint lives on a much higher spiritual level than we do. We don't want to sound proud. People might misunderstand what we mean if we say we're a saint, especially if they have any kind of Roman Catholic background.

In Roman Catholic theology, which has tended to dominate the definition of the term saint, a saint is a super-person. Roman Catholic theology says, *“A saint is one who has exhibited unsurpassable devotion to Christ.”* If you take that definition of a saint, you might be reluctant to call yourself a saint. It would be hard for you to say, *“My devotion to Christ has no capability of being surpassed by anyone, anytime.”* At least I hope it would be hard for you to say that.

The Roman Catholic Church says that people who have lived lives of unsurpassable devotion to Jesus Christ are worthy to be called saints, to be canonized, which means: *“to be made the spiritual standard”* or *“lifted up as spiritual models.”* They make statues and stain glass windows of the saints. They are to be venerated (worshiped), prayed to, appealed to, praised, exalted and honored. That makes us uncomfortable with the term saint. The Roman Catholic Church teaches that saints are exalted in their heavenly life to a position of special clout with God. The reason we appeal to them, honor them, and extol them is so they, in receiving our honor, veneration, and prayers, will intercede with God for our needs. They become intermediaries, intercessors for us and we want to stay in their good graces.

These things make us very uncomfortable with being called a saint. However, you might be interested to know that Paul's favorite word for Christians is the word *“Saint.”* He uses it forty times in his epistles. And when he speaks of saints, he is referring to all Christians.

As believers, we partake of the divine nature and we share His life. Every believer is a saint. We are in Christ, separated from sin unto God, for holy purposes. There should be no reluctance in your mind of calling yourself a *“saint.”* Our only reluctance might come from the fact that we're not living as a saint should live—holy. The title *“saint”* we deserve by virtue of

our being in Christ.

Paul uses this title for the most messed up believers in the New Testament:

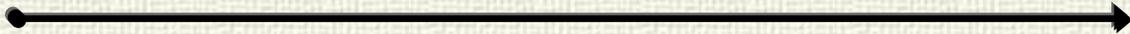
To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling, with all who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours: 1 Corinthians 1:2 NASB

With all of their sin, some of which was worse than unbelievers, Paul still calls them "saints."

You don't have to die and have them make a statue of you before you become a saint. And saints are not super spiritual Christians. Our cultural use of this term is wrong. All believers are saints. There are only two kinds of people in the world—saints and aints. The term "saint" is never used to speak of our practice. It is always used to speak of our position. The word saint is to remind us of who we are. We are saints and we are to live a holy life.

Paul ends this section with, ***"Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."*** "Grace" and "peace" were common salutations in Greek and Jewish letters respectively in Paul's day. God's grace is both His unmerited favor and His divine enablement. Were it not for God's grace there would be no peace.

Next week we'll look at verses 2-4 which deal with the gospel. What exactly does Paul mean by "the gospel"?



This message was preached by [David B. Curtis](#) on October 17, 2010. Media #524.

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