

The Servant of the Gospel (Part 1)

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Date: 25 July 2010

Preacher: Don Coleman

[0:00] Take your Bibles and let's open them to Romans chapter 1.

! That's where we're going to be tonight. Romans chapter 1, and we are making our way through what is technically called the prologue.

Prologue to the letter. I might use a different word. The introduction. This is Paul's introduction to the letter. And, you know, prologue sounds kind of, I don't know, scholarly.

I don't want to sound like that. But it is the prologue. It's the introduction. And we've looked at the first four verses, which reveal to us.

What I call the significance of the gospel. And I don't need to go back and tell you or review any of that. We talked about the mandate of the gospel and the message.

[1:12] And that is what we saw in the first four verses. Tonight, we want to begin to look at the final verses of the introduction.

The prologue. Verses 5 through 18. The prologue, by the way, goes all the way through 18. Verse 18. And though we're going to get into some really meaty stuff by the time we get to the end of the introduction, you might be thinking that, well, you know, this is, this introductory stuff isn't all that interesting.

But I hope that we'll be able to get something from that tonight. And so, verses 5 through 18 is going to be the focus tonight and next Sunday as we finish up on the prologue.

And I want us to see not only the significance of the gospel, but tonight the subject is the servant of the gospel.

The servant of the gospel. And primarily or initially or specifically, it's Paul. Paul is the servant of the gospel.

[2:18] That's how he's introducing himself in the introduction to his letter. However, there is something he says here, and we'll get to that. That makes it very clear that we, too, are the servants of the gospel.

Servants of the gospel. And that's what we're going to read about here. Verse 5. If you'll follow along with me, and we'll read all the way through to verse 18. If I'll get my little sticky note out of the way.

I don't need it anyway. It doesn't have anything written on it. Verse 5. Through him. Hey, let's just start with verse 1. Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated to the gospel of God, which he promised before through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures.

Concerning, the gospel concerns, his son Jesus Christ, our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness by the resurrection from the dead, through him, through Jesus, we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations for his name, among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ.

And make note of that verse right there. You also. Okay. We'll get back to that. To all who are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints, grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

[3:58] First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world. For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers, making request, if by some means, now at last, I may find a way in the will of God to come to you.

For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, so that you may be established. That is, that I may be encouraged together with you by the mutual faith, both of you and me.

Now, I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that I often plan to come to you, but was hindered until now, that I might have some fruit among you also, just as among the other Gentiles.

I am a debtor, both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to wise and to unwise. So, as much as is in me, I am ready to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome also.

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from heaven, or excuse me, revealed from faith to faith, as it is written, the just shall live by faith.

[5:33] Now, we are going to stop right there. I said verse 18, but verse 18 really carries us on into the body of the letter. So, we'll stop right there. And tonight, we're going to see the servant of the gospel.

Consider what Paul says about that, initially about himself, but based upon the statement that I pointed out to you a moment ago, about us as well.

We are servants of the gospel. There are four things that Paul is going to say or tell us about his service, to the gospel, and ours as well.

And I want to move through three of them tonight, and then we'll spend a little more time on the fourth one next Sunday night, if God gives us next Sunday night.

He may not give us next Sunday. It may be our last day on planet Earth. Who knows? So, I just want to always say, if God gives us the day, we'll look at the fourth one next Sunday.

[6:37] Now, under, then, that heading, the servant, or that main point, the servant, or servants of the gospel, I want you to notice, first of all, that Paul, in a sense, gives us some instructions concerning the call, call to the gospel, to be a servant of the gospel.

He gives us some instructions in the first place, and I would have you look there again at verse 5. That's why I had that sticky note in there. I'll put it back.

Verse 5 again, just look at that. Through him we have received grace and apostleship for the obedience to the faith among all nations for his name.

I want you to pay close attention to the two words, grace and apostleship. Not so much the meaning of the two words.

We understand the word grace. And we've already talked about the word apostleship, and though he, so he's not using apostle in the technical sense here. He is saying that it's been given to all of us.

[7:52] Grace and apostleship. And so the word apostle means sent one, or to be sent in this sense. It is that there is the sending.

You've been sent as a special messenger of God. All right, so those two words, grace and apostleship, the meaning of them I think you understand, but it's the order of the two words I want you to pay attention to.

Grace comes before apostleship. You say, is that a big deal? I think it is. Or maybe I should put it this way.

Salvation must come before service. Jesus says, come unto me, before he says, go you into all the world and make disciples.

Grace, then apostleship. Saved, then sent. And it reminded me of John Wesley. John and Charles Wesley. Who were sent as missionaries back in the early 1700s.

[9:00] Sent as missionaries to the new world. Here, America. Not here, Oklahoma. Actually, they were sent to Georgia. And you might know the story. As they were traveling by ship across the ocean to the new world, going to be missionaries, sent to be missionaries, missionaries.

Neither of them were saved. They were both lost people. They were lost. Both John and Charles.

And as the story goes, as they were traveling by ship, a great storm came up in the ocean there.

Tremendous storm. Everybody was terrified. And John happened to take note of some German Moravians. Moravian Christians who were there on board and noticed that they seemed to be quite calm in the midst of this storm.

And they shared their faith with John and Charles. John and Charles went on and made it, of course, to the new world safely and made it to Georgia safely. But their ministry there was a miserable failure.

And they got in a little bit of trouble. And they had to flee. And they headed back to England. And John Wesley said, his famous quote, he said, I went to America to convert the Indians.

[10:26] But who shall convert me? And after his famous Altars Gate experience, John Wesley gives testimony that he was saved.

And few would argue that God, argue against the fact that God mightily used John Wesley to reach countless millions of people with the gospel.

But it was only after he was saved. He was saved. So, saved, then sent. Paul says, grace and apostleship.

And I think the order is deliberate. And so then he gives these instructions. Verse 5, obedience to the faith.

That's instruction number one. I mean, if you are sent, I mean, you're saved, you've grace, God grants you grace and ascending, then, I tell you, you ought to obey the faith.

[11:29] Ought to obey the faith. Now, Paul's speaking of himself primarily here. That was Paul's attitude toward the call, the call to proclaim the gospel.

His attitude was obedience to the faith. And then he says, among all nations. That's part of the instruction as well. That was Paul's assignment.

He was assigned, that was the assignment of his call to all the nations for his name. Do you see that in verse 5? I mean, just in just quick fashion, in just a sentence.

Paul makes note of these instructions. instructions. Now, he hasn't called them instructions, and maybe you've not received them as personal instructions to us yet.

That'll come with verse 6. He's describing his own relationship with the call, his apostleship, not in the technical sense, but in the sense that he was sent to proclaim the gospel.

[12:38] Grace and apostleship through obedience to the faith among all the nations for his name. That's his authority. his authority.

And if we're going to respond to the call, then we must respond in this way. Obedience to the faith. The faith in the sense of the faith, the gospel, God's word in its totality.

Obedience to the faith among all the nations. That's our assignment. And what's our authority? For his name. For his name. We don't go in our name. We don't go in our name.

We dare not. Our name carries no authority. But in the name of the Lord. In his name. Then verse 6 is where he makes the connection. Where he moves it to you.

Well, to me and you. You also. Do you see that in verse 6? Verse 6. The latter part of it. You also are the called of Jesus Christ.

[13:49] You also. You're apostles is the idea here. So Paul very quickly went from we speaking of himself and his fellow ministers possibly referring to those who traveled with him in his missionary journeys possibly even including all the apostles.

we he moved from we to you also. He just moved it all right there to us. Laid it all there in our laps. What's true of me is true of you.

And so then what is true of me becomes my instructions to you. Obedience to the faith among all the nations for his name. For his name. And then Paul gets more personal here.

He's talking about this call. God has given grace and apostleship. And he says to you also to all verse 7 who are in Rome in Rome.

So in the sense of the letter in the immediate sense the initial audience here of this letter the called of Jesus are known by God.

[15:11] He knows them. He knows who they are. In the sense that this letter and this commissioning extends to every one of us here he knows who you are.

he knows who he sent to all who are in Rome. So whether so let's just apply it to the contemporary setting our day right here.

So whether it be in ancient Rome or modern Bartlesville that's where we are. The called of God are known by him. They're known by him.

He knows where each one is. And he knows where you are and he has called you and he has not forgotten about that. I'm maybe well not maybe pretty clearly making an application that's not necessarily intended here.

I'm carrying it to the nth degree and I'm telling you that God has called you sent you and he's not forgotten about that.

[16:23] he knows where you are and he knows whether you're obeying him obedience of the faith and he knows whether you are sharing the gospel among the nations this nation right now right here this this part of it and he knows whether you're going in his authority.

He knows where you are. All right so really he knows. Secondly the called are not only known by God but remember that the called are loved by him.

Verse 7 beloved of God called to be saints beloved of God so God called you and through Paul he has instructed you to be obedient to the faith among all the nations for his name and he loves you he loves you beloved of God.

The called are also the assembled of God you're assembled by him it's not just simply that he has called all of us and sent all of us and we're all freelance gospelers he's assembled us see Paul by this statement here called to be saints very language suggests a raising up a lifting up of a body of people kind of an army an organized group of people who have been sent and I think this is a reference to the church God has literally lifted up a body out of the grave of lostness now he certainly saves each of us individually but collectively he assembles us that's the local church that's God's program for reaching the world through the local church and he's raised up this body this body of believers this ecclesia the assembly of the called out one lifted us up out of the lostness and out of the world and formed us as a body as a church as an assembly so we're the called or the assembly ones and Paul calls us saints I'm no saint we better be not a saint you're lost he's not talking about a saint in in the sense of some specified or specific class within Christianity like our Catholics believe and teach he's describing all who have trusted Christ as Lord and Savior we're the saints assembled here tonight the saints the set apart ones describes all who have trusted [19:50] Christ so number one then we have Paul's instructions to the Roman Christians number two verses eight and nine Paul now moves into words of intercession it's Paul's intercession for the Roman Christians all this is within the introduction all right to the letter Paul's intercession not just instructions to them but his intercession and he begins with praise praising them look at verse eight first I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all had to have been from the deep south for you all that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world tremendous point of praise or statement of praise for these Roman Christians he said you all literally with reference to all of you all right takes a lot more words to say it that way let's just say you all in fact we could just shorten and make it one word y'all okay huh all y'all okay just say y'all here in

Oklahoma all right so Paul is praising God for each individual you all with reference to every one of you he is praising God for each individual in the Roman church and for what is he praising them well he tells this that in verse eight I already read it your face your face is spoken of throughout the whole world now let me explain something to you here that I think is important when Paul wrote this originally I know we don't have the original letter he wrote to the Romans but I mean we go back to some of the oldest of copies and manuscripts!

We get the Greek text we're pretty sure we've got that right in fact I'm sure of it because I know God and he has preserved his word but in the Greek text it really would read like this that as I'm praising you that or thank God that the face of you is spoken of it's kind of awkward isn't it the faith of you is spoken of now you remember the little lesson I don't know if it was last Sunday or Sunday before I talked with you about word order in the Greek sentence or phrase and if the writer wants to emphasize something he would normally or she would normally place it to the front of the phrase or sentence it wouldn't be right and look right in English but that's the way they did it and so that's how he wrote it the face of you is spoken of and then there's another added emphasis here that is the word the not just faith but the faith the faith so what is the emphasis in the phrase is it the Romans Roman Christians is it even their faith so much you know a lot of us have faith we have faith and just faithful people and and sometimes you can get a good reputation for just being a faithful kind of person you're faithful but that's not what he's talking about the emphasis is not on the Roman Christians or their faith per se but rather the faith period the faith the faith that you have embraced yes the faith that you're living out yes the faith that you are proclaiming that is what everyone is talking about in reference to you that's still a compliment to them it's not that he is not complimenting them or not praising them for their stalwart commitment to the one and only faith the true faith the gospel of the

Lord Jesus Christ he is commending them and praising them but but it is the faith that is the emphasis here and it is spoken of throughout the world and apparently it is spoken of throughout the world the faith is because of the commitment and the efforts of the Christians in Rome and they were in a very strategic place in the world to proclaim the gospel and to have the faith spread throughout the world it was the crossroads of the world Rome was and so he is commending the faith and it begs the question what do people in Bartlesville speak of when they speak of Highland

Park Baptist Church or any church every church ought to ask that question what do they think of what do they speak of they speak about our music

[25:20] I think they probably do speak about our preaching speak about our programs speak about our buildings you know they drive by there's Highland Park beautiful building they speak about that probably sometimes our commitment to the church do they speak of Highland Park in that sense or do they speak about the faith the faith that is proclaimed there at Highland Park every time they meet and proclaimed also and lived out by its membership in the community you see there's something to pick up on here Paul did not emphasize the faith by putting it first in the phrase and also adding the definite article the faith he didn't do that just for nothing it's because he wants the readers to know that it is the glorious wonderful faith the faith the gospel of

Jesus Christ that is being being talked about in relation to the Roman Christians and talked about throughout the world then in verse nine we have Paul's praying first his praising and now Paul's praying and his praising is in regard to the faith of the Romans the Roman Christians and his praying is for the Roman Christians themselves praying for them and this is just so touching and for God is my witness Paul said verse nine whom I serve I serve this God with my spirit in the gospel of his son as God is my witness he's saying you can ask God that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers always in my prayers what what

I mean what would that be like the apostle Paul praying for you praying for your church our church I know he's dead now with Jesus now and Jesus ever make intercession for us but I don't think Paul is there not his job but someone like Paul what would it be like to have Billy Graham Billy Graham praying specifically for Highland Park Baptist Church and for the membership here at the church for our desire and our ministry to spread the gospel of Jesus to this community and beyond what if Billy Graham we found out he wrote us a letter and said I'm telling you every day I pray for you what would that be like and yet you'd have to admit that you know

Paul as well as Billy Graham these guys don't have any more access to the throne of God than any of us and so it brings it all back to us again doesn't it often do we pray for our church and pray for its leadership and are you praying for your church daily this is Paul he is speaking of his intercessory his intercession for the church he's giving them some instructions this is who I am I've been sent by God this this and thus and this is what you need to do and then he speaks of his intercession for them he praises them and he prays for them without ceasing but it's also an example of a missionary's heart of prayer you know up to this point when this letter was written as far as we can tell

Paul had never been to Rome he'd never been there he Paul had never been to the church at Rome did you know that we wrote this letter he'd never been there the church was most likely established by Peter some scholars debate that but it most certainly wasn't Paul he hadn't been there and Paul had never laid eyes on the people to which he wrote and for which he was praying and interceding and yet he prayed for them without ceasing I got to thinking about that and you know I've had the opportunity to travel to another country primarily to Ukraine and Sherry and I and some others in my former church ministered there to a couple of churches there in Sherevo

[30:40] Ukraine and Makarovo very near Sherry and worked with some churches there and I just got all convicted I hardly ever pray for them anymore been a while since I've been there and Paul said and he's never even been to this church and he said without ceasing I'm praying for you praying for you and we need to do that I mean we you know really if we would admit it and sadly admit it that you know we're faithless enough about praying for the people we do know and people we see every day even family and friends and and how much less do we pray unceasingly for those in other lands those faces that we have never seen and we have opportunity to do that so

Paul's instructions to the Romans is very simple you also are the called all called in obedience to the faith to go among the nations for his name for the name of the Lord Paul's intercession for the Roman Christians praising their common faith the faith the one and only faith in the Lord Jesus and praying for them and then third finally Paul's interest in the Roman Christians is very interested in them in a loving way in a deep heartfelt way is very interested in them look at verse 10 verse making request if by some means now at last I may find a way in the will of God to come to you now that's an interesting way of putting it translations vary on that phrase the

King James I think in fact I've got it written right here making request if by any means I may come to you and to you and that really is the idea though it's worded a little different it's kind of awkward awkward to translate but the basic idea is that Paul was giving God a blank check that really is the

basic idea here he's making requests and he's giving God a blank check in the sense of just in whatever way if it be your will I want to go to Rome in whatever way however you do it if you could get me there he's praying that that would be God's will and he's giving God a blank check and his life is the check and so again he's saying Lord I want to go to Rome but I am absolutely at your disposal and I will go!

Well did Paul ever go to Rome? Of course he did and God took that blank check and he filled it out for the maximum amount because you see God sent Paul to Rome in chains in chains I wonder if we're willing to give God a blank check like that when it comes to serving him or going somewhere for him just whatever way you want to do it God I don't know if we have that kind of faith give God a check like that but do we have any right not to I don't think so from scripture in fact 1st Corinthians 6 19 very familiar passage of scripture

Paul says or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you whom you have from God and you are not your own you're not your own for you were bought with a price therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit which are God's I believe Paul meant that well I know he did though the context is a different issue here I talk about mission work and yet the truth applies to whatever it is in your life you belong to him been bought with a price therefore in whatever you do glorify God glorify him now Paul is going back to what he said in verse one and we looked at that several weeks ago in that he identified himself as a bond servant bond slave of the [35:51] Lord Jesus Christ and so a born again believer has in effect willingly turned everything over to the Lord surrendered it all that's what it means to believe by the way it's not an intellectual thing it is a heart lock stock and barrel thing you could put it that way it's all yours and we've turned it all over to him a complete abandonment of self and an unconditional trust in Jesus Christ that's what Romans 10 9 means to confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus or literally that Jesus is Lord he's Lord he's boss he's king he calls the shots he's in charge he's in control and so Paul's entire life really was a blank check in the hands of God and God filled it out he really did to the maximum then when we get to verse 11 he says there for

I long look at 11 for I long to see you we're talking here about Paul's interest his specific heartfelt very very loving interest in the people there in Rome Christians there he said for I long to see you and here's the reason for going to Rome see when you you turn your life over to to God like a bank check he's going to use it God's always up to something and so why did Paul go to Rome verse 11 tells us look at it for long to see you that I may impart to you some spiritual gift so that you may be established established or to this end you might be established with a strong firm foundation that cannot be moved that's what his desire was for for the people and you read through the book of Romans the letter he wrote to them and you think well man what more could he tell them that would establish them and yet he wanted to go to them and impart truth spiritual gift to the end that they would be strong established in their faith now remember Paul did not go to Rome but I mean did go to Rome and how did he go in chains and it begs the question what could God do with a man in chains Philippians chapter one and verse twelve you know where Paul was when he wrote Philippians in prison in Rome what did he say verse twelve chapter one and I want you to know brethren that the things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel so that it has been evident to the whole palace guard those who were guarding!

Christ you may think you have me chained up here and I'm a prisoner of your prisoner but I'm really not I'm a prisoner of Christ and he's put me here and now the entire palace guard knows the gospel of Jesus Christ not that they were all saved but many of them I think were and he said and also he adds this and most of the brethren in the Lord the Roman Christians most brethren in the Lord having become confident by my chains are much more bold to speak the word without fear so can God use a man in chains he certainly can so we have Paul's instructions you also are the called we have his intercession I thank my God for all of you without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers and we have Paul's interest in these Roman believers that by any means some means I might come unto you would that God would put our lives or that we would put our lives at God's disposal in that same way and no telling what God might do you