

Beloved of God in Rome

Assume, for a minute, that we could have the apostle Paul in his resurrection body, as a guest speaker at Spring Valley Bible Church. What do you think he would talk about? The topics in the book of Romans. We know that Paul is not going to grace our church with his presence now. But we have the book of Romans. I am currently teaching it, attempting to give his words life that they might communicate the power of his message to you. I invite you to pray from time to time that God would empower me to teach applicable topics to your life from the book of Romans.

Romans 1:1 Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as (*appointed/to be*) an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God,

Paul is:

1. Slave of Christ Jesus
2. Appointed an apostle (of Jesus Christ)
3. Set apart for the gospel of God (Mission)

Romans 1:2 which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures, (i.e. in the Old Testament)

Romans 1:3 concerning His Son, who was ~~born of~~ (became) a descendant (seed) of David according to the flesh,

Romans 1:4 who was declared **appointed the Son of God with power by **because** of the**

resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord,

Andy Woods, pastor of Sugar Land Bible Church and president of Chafer Theological Seminary taught that Paul gives us six characteristics of Jesus Christ in the first six verses:

1. His Sonship (3a) [divinity]
2. His royal identity (3b) [Davidic Covenant]
3. His humanity (3c) [Sonship + humanity = hypostatic union]
4. His authentication (4a) [Resurrection was authentication]
5. His Lordship (4b)
6. His gift (5-6)

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

We pick up our lesson at the end of verse 5.

All. There are six uses of the word “all” in this first chapter. It is interesting to pull on that thread in this Bible passage and see what we get. It’s like going fishing. You pull up the line and see what you got. But in the Bible, the fabric of Scripture can take you places and shows you things you never saw before. The first three of these “all” statements go from the general (all Gentiles) to the more specific (all of you in Rome) to the very personal (all of you). Since we stated, in agreement with other conservative commentators of the book of Romans, that the central topic is “The Gospel,” then we should glean from this that the Gospel message of Romans is for “all” including you.

The first three “all” start in our verses for today, verses 5 and 7 and continue into verse 8 which we will get to next week.

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verse 5: Obedience of faith among all the Gentiles

verse 7: (Letter addressed to) all those in Rome

verse 8: I thank God for all of you

Often, “gospel” refers in common discussion to the message for the unbeliever. Let us do two things in this discussion. Rather than use the term “gospel” let us use the translation of the Greek term: Good News. The word “gospel” may channel and limit our thinking to the good news for the unbeliever. But, this good news in the book of Romans, if indeed it is the central topic of the book of Romans (and it is), then it is not just for unbelievers (Chapters 1-4) but it is also good news for believers (which good news for the believer is concentrated in chapters six through eight).

The last three uses of “all” in the first chapter of Romans are further on in the chapter. Verse 16 indicates what I said above. Salvation is for everyone.

Romans 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone (all) who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

The last two appearances of “all” in chapter 1 deal with unbelievers who have rejected the gospel. We will get to them in due time.

Now the last phrase in Romans 1:5 says:

Among all the Gentiles. Paul is often called the apostle to the Gentiles. His focus was to the Gentiles, although his ministry always started with “the Jew first.” When the Jews rejected his message, then he went to the Gentiles. Many of the Jews of Paul’s time, as well as in our own time, have rejected their own Messiah. Jesus was a Jew descended from Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. His ministry was to the House of Israel. His

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work on the cross was for “all.” As Gentiles, we are allowed to believe and be saved. We have the privilege of believing in the Jewish Messiah.

Paul writes in several places that God gave him a ministry to the Gentiles.

Romans 11:13 But I am speaking to you who are Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle of Gentiles, I magnify my ministry,

Romans 15:15 But I have written very boldly to you on some points so as to remind you again, because of the grace that was given me from God,

Romans 15:16 to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, ministering as a priest the gospel of God, so that my offering of the Gentiles may become acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

The word “gospel” is another word that is frequently repeated in the book of Romans. It is a thread in the fabric of Scripture. Herman has a series dedicated to following different descriptions of the gospel. “The Gospel of...”

Romans 15:17 Therefore in Christ Jesus I have found reason for boasting in things pertaining to God.

Romans 15:18 For I will not presume to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me, resulting in the obedience of the Gentiles by word and deed,

Paul explains in an earlier letter, to the Galatians, that his focus was on Gentiles.

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

Galatians 1:16 to reveal His Son in me so that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood,

Galatians 1:17 nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went away to Arabia, and returned once more to Damascus.

Remember that Jews were not to associate with the Gentiles. They were “unclean.” But now Paul has a ministry targeting them!

Back to our passage:

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

Among whom you. There has been debate on how the church at Rome got started. Was it started by Jews who heard Peter's message at Pentecost? Or was it started by Gentiles who heard the message from someone else? In either case, these believers to whom Paul is writing are

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in a Gentile nation surrounded by other non-believing Gentiles. This also meshes with Paul's "prime directive" to go to the Gentiles.

Called of Jesus Christ.

OK, here is another word that is repeated throughout this chapter: called.

verse 1: Paul is a "called apostle"

verse 6: You are "called of Jesus Christ"

verse 7: Those in Rome "called saints"

He doesn't use the word again until chapter 8, the great chapter on spirituality. Interesting.

Romans 1:7 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.

All. The third use of this word in this chapter.

Who are beloved of God. Why are they "beloved of God?" Because they are in The Beloved, Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 1:5 He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will,

Ephesians 1:6 to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.

Ephesians 1:7 In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace

Because we are in Him, we all are beloved of God the Father. It is called position in Christ or a term often used by R.B. Thieme Jr., positional truth.

In Rome.

There is a saying, “All roads lead to Rome.” I just assumed some historian made up this phrase. But this is based in history. Ancient history. In Rome there was a pillar named the Milliarium Aureum, the Golden Milestone that Wikipedia says, “The Milliarium Aureum (Classical Latin: [miːlliˈaːrɪ.ũː ˈaʊɾɛ.ũː]; Italian: Miliario Aureo), also known by the translation Golden Milestone, was a monument, probably of marble or gilded bronze, erected by the Emperor Augustus near the Temple of Saturn in the central Forum of Ancient Rome. All roads were considered to begin at this monument and all distances in the Roman Empire were measured relative to it. On it perhaps were listed all the major cities in the empire and distances to them, though the monument's precise location and inscription remain matters of debate among historians.¹”

“Augustus, as curator viarum, erected the monument in 20 BCE. It probably received the name Milliarium Aureum soon after its inauguration. It symbolized the starting point of the Roman road system to the rest of Italy and to all the imperial possessions.²”

Let us, look at Paul’s logic for this trip. Yes, he wanted to visit Rome. It is the capital of the Roman Empire, arguably, the center or capital of the

1 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Milliarium_Aureum

2 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Milliarium_Aureum

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Greco-Roman world at that time. Indeed, he went there. But from another passage, his main objective apparently was Spain.

Romans 15:22 For this reason I have often been prevented from coming to you;

Romans 15:23 but now, with no further place for me in these regions, and since I have had for many years a longing to come to you

Romans 15:24 whenever I go to Spain—for I hope to see you in passing, and to be helped on my way there by you, when I have first enjoyed your company for a while—

So why go to Rome if Spain is his ultimate goal?

First, it is the center of the Greco-Roman world. It is more than likely that no apostle had yet visited Rome. There is a church or several local churches in Rome. They are in a Gentile land and it is in his apostolic “charter” as apostle to the Gentile to visit it. He stated that he desired to visit Rome.

Certainly the “Great Commission” was on his mind.

Acts 1:8 but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.”

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Matthew 28:18 And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.

Matthew 28:19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,

Matthew 28:20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

Certainly Rome along with Spain and Britain qualified as to the ends of the earth as known in those days.

But more than that, it is a hub of international travel. If all roads lead to Rome, there are many sea routes to Rome as well. If the roads lead to Rome, then the roads also lead back to the edges of the empire. Think of it as a hub of travel. If Paul left from Jerusalem to go to Spain, how many ships were going to that destination? If you look at a route map for American Airlines, you see there are several cities or hubs into which it flies. In order to go from one city in the US to another mid-sized city, it is often necessary to go to one of these hubs (like Dallas, Chicago, Atlanta) and take a second flight to your final destination. Look at the Roman Empire the same way. Rome was the largest hub. So going there would give Paul a greater choice of ships to take him to Spain. Also, it was a shorter trip to go to Spain from Rome than to go straight to Spain from Jerusalem.

Additionally, Paul is looking for some help, perhaps financially, to get to Spain. It probably was not a cheap trip by boat. It was not a day trip.

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There is no Biblical record of Paul going to Spain. There are extra-Biblical accounts saying the Paul did go to Spain. There are also no Biblical records of his death. Extra-Biblical accounts indicate he died during the reign of Emperor Nero by beheading.

There is a sense in which we can use Paul's life as a template for our own. No, Jesus Christ didn't appear to you on the road. No, you are not an apostle. And there is little chance that you will be beheaded by the government. But, at some point, assuming you are now a believer in Jesus Christ, someone, most likely a Christian, who was an ambassador for Christ gave you the good news and you believed in Jesus Christ as savior. At the point of belief, you were called or invited to a specific mission and given a spiritual gift to assist you in that mission. That spiritual gift and mission will become clear to you as you study the Bible, gain information about God and your Christian life and you consistently walk by faith in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Remember what Paul said:

1 Corinthians 11:1 Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ.

Or

Ephesians 5:1 Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children;

Ephesians 5:2 and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.

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Called saints. The third use of “called.” The basic meaning of called is “invited.” In this chapter, it seems to have a stronger meaning than that. Paul was called apostle. If he was just invited, he grabbed the invitation and ran with it. If the believers in Rome were the invited ones of Jesus, then we know they grabbed the invitation and ran with it. We know that because Paul later on states that their faith is known throughout the empire. If they are invited as “saints,” then they grabbed that and demonstrated that through their faith.

Remember that the basic meaning of “saints” is “set-apart ones.” They are set apart to Jesus Christ as all believers in the Church Age are.

Grace was mentioned in this lesson, but I didn’t give you a doctrine. Herman Mattox has one on-line that we can briefly look at in the time remaining:

https://www.springvalleybiblechurch.org/Audio/Ephesians/notes/2022-03-13Sunday_Morning.pdf