

Sunday Morning Sermon

December 13, 2020

“The Gospel of God” (Part V)

Romans 1:1-7

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***<sup>1</sup> Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated to the gospel of God <sup>2</sup> which He promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures, concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, <sup>4</sup> and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead. <sup>5</sup> Through Him we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations for His name, <sup>6</sup> among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ;***

***<sup>7</sup> 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.***

The title of our sermon this morning is “The Gospel of God,” and this is Part 5. We’ve been working through this text, Romans chapter 1, verses 1 through 7, where Paul has introduced himself, he’s introduced his subject, and he’s come to an explanation of the gospel. And so, we’ve spent a few sermons now – that’s saying it lightly, we’ve spent 5 sermons – talking about this grand and glorious subject which is the gospel of God. In the greeting of this letter, we are introduced to a slave and his subject. We see that in verse 1. Paul is a slave of Jesus Christ, a called apostle. He is one set apart. The subject of his work is found at the end of verse 1, and that is the gospel of God.

So, over several weeks now, we’ve carefully considered the way in which Paul introduces this subject, the gospel of God. We’ve noted that the gospel of God concerns a promise in verse 2, that which God had promised long before, through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures. Then we’ve noted that the gospel of God concerns a Person in verse 3. It concerns God’s Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Concerning Jesus Christ, we see the gospel magnified in the Lord’s humiliation (verse 3), He was: ***born of the seed of David according to the flesh***, – And we see the gospel magnified in His exaltation (verse 4), He was: ***declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection*** ‘from among dead ones.’ You remember those texts that we went through explaining what Paul means by those phrases.

So now having reminded us of the promise of the gospel, verse 2, focusing our attention on the Person of the gospel in verses 3 and 4, Paul now turns to summarize the purpose of the gospel in verse 5: ***Through Him we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations for His name***, – As we consider this text together, note with me from verse 1: the context of verse 1 and the connection of verse 1 to verse 5. Paul was redeemed out of the slave market of sin and made a slave, a bondservant, a slave, of the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul was given a high calling, given a vocation as an apostle, a sent one of Jesus Christ. And Paul was set apart to the work of proclaiming the gospel of God, the good news of salvation that God had promised long before.

And then Paul, verse 5, was given the grace of apostleship for the obedience of faith. In other words, Paul is a man on a mission. Paul has a mission. Paul’s goal, Paul’s ambition is the obedience of faith in response

to the gospel of God. Paul was charged by Jesus Christ to accomplish that mission, to run his race, even in that day among many who would be bitterly hostile to that message. Consider the context of Paul's ministry. Paul knew that well. He was one that was persecuted. He himself persecuted Christians, those of the Way, even to their death, binding, delivering up to prison both men and women – Acts chapter 22, verse 4. In Acts chapter 20 Paul says, "I don't know what's going to happen to me: ***except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city...that chains and tribulations await me.***"

In other words, in all that suffering, in all that affliction, in all that adversity, the likes of which you and I can hardly imagine, how is it that Paul endured with zeal, and fervency, and faithfulness in his mission? Paul is a man on a mission. And it's the mission of the gospel of God. It's the mission of God, the purpose of God that Paul is to accomplish. How in the world did Paul do it? Paul did it through grace and faith. Paul obeyed by grace through faith. Paul labored in his ministry. Paul labored in the gospel through God's provision of grace and through a pursuit of God's purpose. I've planned for us this morning to consider the purpose of the gospel in verse 5 under two headings. The first, 1) God's Provision, and the second, 2) God's Purpose or Our Pursuit.

### 1) God's Provision

First, notice with me God's provision. In verse 5, Paul explains that through Him, we have received grace and apostleship. Now Paul has referred here, to the gospel of God. And right away in verse 5, we're introduced to a word at the very heart of the gospel. We're introduced to a word at the heart of this letter, a word that is at the heart of God Himself. And that word in verse 5 is "grace." Notice with me, it's important to establish at the outset, that provision of grace that Paul has received in verse 5 comes only through Him. Do you see that? The subject of verses 3 and 4 is the Lord Jesus Christ. That pronoun "Him" in verse 5 refers back to the Lord Jesus Christ.

In other words, the grace of God that Paul has received, the grace of God that comes to anyone who would be saved from their sin and saved to ministry, saved to the gospel, so to speak, comes only through Him who is: ***born of the seed of David according to the flesh***, – Through Him who was born of the virgin. Through Him who lived a perfect and sinless life. It is through Him who died on Calvary's cross, a sacrifice for sin. It's given through Him who was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures. It's through Him who was: ***declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.*** In other words, that grace that was given to Paul came through the Lord Jesus Christ and only through, exclusively through the Lord Jesus Christ. The law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

Next, notice with me, Paul's use of the plural pronoun "we" in verse 5. The grace that came through Jesus Christ, through the Person and work of Jesus Christ by faith, Paul says "we" have received. Now who is Paul referring to when he uses that word "we"? It's a plural pronoun. Some say Paul's referring to himself together with the saints at Rome, the recipients of this letter. Paul was a called apostle, verse 1, and they are of course also "the called" of Jesus Christ. You'll notice that in verse 6, having received grace just as Paul did. However, the specific form of that word in verse 5 is always used of apostolic ministry. Whenever that form of the word is used, it's always referring to a ministry that the apostles had in their official office as apostles. It's never meant for saints like you and I. It didn't include the saints at Rome.

So then, if we consider it that way, Paul could be referring to himself together with the other apostles. And that's possible. Or, Paul is using here what's referred to as an epistolary or an editorial plural in referring to himself. This is a literary device, if you will. In other words, Paul uses the word "we" in the letter but it's a literary device common to formal letters at the time, common to Paul in Paul's letters, and

Paul here is referring to himself alone. Either way that you take that, whether it's referring to Paul and the other apostles or Paul to himself, Paul says "through Him" – through Jesus Christ we've received grace. What is true of Paul – we have to understand – what's true of Paul is also true of the other apostles, is also true of all the saints at Rome, and is also true of you and I. The grace that Paul received is grace that all saints receive. Not all saints – contrary to charismania today – not all saints receive the grace of apostleship, but all saints receive grace. All saints receive God's provision of grace for ministry work.

So, what is grace? What does that word mean? What is grace? What is Paul referring to when he uses that word? Like other words at the heart of the gospel, for example words like "love," words like "faith" – even words like "sin," "justice," "judgment," "wrath" – the word "grace" has been horrendously abused and widely misunderstood. What is grace? And listen, that's by those in seminaries and in professing churches that should know better. And it has been beaten, battered, abused. The word has been misunderstood, maligned, mistreated, misrepresented. Many have taken the word, they've stripped it of any context. They have drained it of any power. They've robbed it of any costliness. They've divorced it from any responsibility. And they have merciless cheapened the word beyond all recognition to suit a hellish deception. And the hellish deception is this: that you can be a Christian apart from a miraculous work of grace in your heart. That's the deception. You rob it of its value. You rob it of its power. You rob it of its meaning in order to accomplish what? To communicate to masses that they can be saved by a cheapened, valueless, worthless, do-nothing grace. Do you see? So, when you hear the word grace today you've got to turn up your discernment. Dial up the discernment.

In the 1940's, Dietrich Bonhoeffer described the grace being peddled by most churches then and most churches today – he described it as cheap. And it has been grossly devalued since then. I don't commend Bonhoeffer's theology but I do commend his statements here about cheap grace. Bonhoeffer says that:

*"Cheap grace means grace sold (or grace peddled) on the market like cheapjacks' wares. (It's a counterfeit grace. It's a cheap knock-off in other words. It's fake.)"*

He describes cheap grace as: *forgiveness of sin...thrown away at cut prices...forgiveness without repentance...communion without confession...grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate. Cheap grace (is grace that) justifies sin without justifying the sinner.*

*Costly grace (in contrast) is the treasure hidden in the field; for the sake of it a man will (gladly) go and sell all that he has. It is the pearl of great price for which the merchant will sell all his goods.*

*Such grace is costly because it calls us to follow, and it is grace because it calls us to follow Jesus Christ. It is costly because it cost a man his life, and it is grace because it gives a man the only true life. It's costly because it condemns sin, and grace because it justifies the sinner. Above all, it is costly because it cost God the life of His Son....and what has cost God much cannot be cheap for us. Above all, it is grace because God did not reckon His Son too dear a price to pay for our life, but delivered Him up for us.*

"Cheap" – Bonhoeffer's use of the term refers to its value, the value of that so-called grace. It is entirely worthless, is what is meant by the word "cheap." It may be entirely worthless but the cost to the sinner is impossibly high. If you embrace cheap grace you'll pay for it in eternity.

Cheap, counterfeit grace presumes to change your future while doing nothing to change your present or your past. It claims to alter your standing while doing nothing to alter your state before God. Cheap grace looks common. Let that sink in for a minute. Cheap grace looks common.

Biblical words, brothers and sisters, have biblical meanings. So, we look to Scripture to define “grace” as we would to define any word used by God in His Word. We have to look to the Bible to understand the definition of the word. What is grace? Now some would define “grace” as God’s unmerited favor – simple definition. You can sometimes get yourself in trouble using simple definitions. They would say “justice” is getting what you deserve. “Mercy” is not getting what you deserve. And “grace” is getting what you do not deserve. Do you see what they’re saying? But the problem with boiling down the definition of a word like “grace” is that you end up boiling down the God-intended scope of the word as well.

First, listen, God’s grace is not merely favor bestowed on undeserving sinners. God’s grace is favor bestowed upon hell-deserving sinners. It’s God pouring out mercy, and love, and forgiveness, and favor, and salvation upon those who deserve exactly the opposite. Spurgeon said:

*“The first link between my soul and Jesus Christ is not my goodness, but my badness! Not my merit, but my misery – not my riches, but my need!”*

And so, grace then is the free love of God whereby He freely gives every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus to those who deserve His wrath, to those who deserve His judgment, to those who deserve hell. Grace is where He freely chooses for the sake of His Son to set His love upon, and to forgive, and to redeem, and to justify, and to adopt, and to sanctify, and to glorify men, women, boys, girls who deserve torment in hell forever. Sending His own Son to pay the penalty for their sin. Sending His own Son to secure the righteousness that will be theirs through faith. Sending forth the Spirit of His Son into their hearts, the Spirit of grace by whom they cry out, “Abba, Father.” And all of that so that: ***in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.*** – “to the praise of the glory of His grace.”

So first then, it is the grace of salvation. It’s the grace of salvation. However, second there’s another understanding of grace communicated in verse 5. And that is the grace that Paul received in connection with his ministry. Verse 5: ***Through Him*** (through the Lord Jesus Christ) ***we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations for His name,*** –

So, what does Paul mean then in verse 5 by connecting these two nouns “grace” and “apostleship”? What’s the relationship here between grace and apostleship? Some, in reading the text, see them as two separate things, two separate concepts, two separate ideas. Paul receives the grace of conversion, the grace of salvation – that’s “grace” – and then Paul receives his calling as an apostle, his marching orders for ministry – that’s “apostleship” – and they divide the two, one from another. That doesn’t appear to be the case here, and I want to explain that to us.

It appears as though Paul is using a figure of speech here in verse 5. It’s very common to the Bible, very common to Paul, and it’s called a “hendiadys” – a “hendiadys.” It’s the expression of a single idea, a figure of speech connecting two nouns by the word “and” to express a single idea, or to express a single concept. An example would be “nice and warm.” – “It’s ‘nice and warm’ in the auditorium every Sunday morning.” That means “toasty” – nice and warm, nicely warm. Two words, two nouns, connected by “and,” the conjunction, to express a true concept that it is nice and warm in the auditorium every Sunday morning. I’m just saying that facetiously.

Paul uses this hendiadys in verse 5 and Paul means here, by the use of these two words with the conjunction “and” between them – it’s a figure of speech, a literary device – to mean the grace of apostleship, the gift of apostleship, the gift of being an apostle. He’s not referring to the gift of salvation here. He’s referring to another intended meaning in the scope of God’s grace to sinners. He’s referring to the gift of serving the Lord in his ministry as an apostle. Paul had not only been saved by His grace, God had also supplied Paul with the grace of, or grace for his ministry as an apostle. Paul’s ministry – start to finish, sum total – Paul’s ministry is by the grace of God.

Now Paul refers to this concept of grace, this grace for ministry in other places as well. Turn with me to Ephesians chapter 3. Let’s just look at a couple of examples. We’re going to look at more of this or concern ourselves more with this next week as well. But look with me at Ephesians chapter 3. Grace for ministry. Paul’s ministry by the grace of God, we see it in Ephesians chapter 3, beginning in verse 1. Paul says, ‘therefore,’ listen: ***For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles—*** (You notice the similarity between Ephesians chapter 3, verse 1 and Romans chapter 1, verse 1. Paul is a slave of Jesus Christ, a called apostle. Add that with verse 5: “for the obedience of faith among all nations for His name,” Here Paul is: ***the prisoner of Christ Jesus*** (It’s a way of saying the same thing) ***for you Gentiles—*** “among all nations.”

Verse 2: ***if indeed you have heard of the dispensation (that word means stewardship) if indeed you have heard of the (stewardship) of the grace of God which was given to me for you,*** (In other words, God gives Paul a stewardship. It’s his apostleship. That stewardship is a stewardship of grace that God has given to Paul for the accomplishment of His ministry. Paul is going to serve as an apostle by the grace of God, and it’s his responsibility to be a good steward of that grace that’s been given to him. ‘You’ve heard of the stewardship of grace which God has given to me for you, for your benefit’ – verse 3) ***how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already, by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), which in other ages (verse 5) was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets: that*** (for the purpose that, verse 6) ***the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel,*** – And we’re going to talk about that in verse 5 with respect to “among all nations for His name.”

What is the purpose of God in the gospel? The purpose of God in the gospel, the purpose, the summarizing statement, the summarizing mission of Paul in this proclamation of the gospel of God is the obedience of faith among all nations for the name of Jesus Christ. Do you see?

– ***that the Gentiles (verse 6) should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel, of which (verse 7) I became a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given to me by the effective working of (Paul’s power. No!) – by the effective working of His power. (God’s power) To me, (verse 8) who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ,*** –

You see, Paul’s not talking only or merely about the grace of salvation. Grace goes beyond salvation into the life and ministry of the Christian. Do you see? In other words, the driving force behind Paul’s ministry was not *his* power, not *his* will, not *his* talent, not *his* skill, not *his* efforts of persuasion. It’s not in how he manipulates words or manipulates reason or manipulates wills like you see happening all the time in churches today. But the driving force behind Paul’s ministry was the gift of the grace of God given to him by the effective working of God’s power. Paul’s calling as an apostle, Paul’s work in ministry, Paul’s effectiveness in missionary labors, everything else associated with Paul living the Christian life is rooted and grounded in the grace of Almighty God.

That's true of you and I, brothers and sisters, our Christian life – If you're here today and you have turned from your sin to put faith in Jesus Christ, then your life is to be lived by the grace of God through faith. We have this grace – Romans chapter 5, right? – We have this grace, in which we stand and we access that grace through faith. That's what Paul is doing here in his ministry. Notice verse 7, it was through the effective working of God's power, not Paul's power, that this grace was given.

This same grace effectively working in Paul, is the same grace that effectively works in all who believe. All of us are given grace whereby we serve the risen Lord. Where's an example of that? Flip the page. Look at Ephesians chapter 4 and look there at verse 7: ***But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift.*** (It comes through Jesus Christ. Do you see?) ***Therefore He says:*** (verse 8) ***“When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men.”***

Now, what are some of these evident gifts of His grace? Verse 11: ***And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry,*** (It's the saints who do the work of the ministry, along with those apostles, and prophets, and evangelists, and pastors, and teachers. And that is for the purpose – verse 12) ***for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.*** Particularly in our letter, Paul mentions this grace in this way.

Look at Romans chapter 12. This is throughout the writings of Paul. We need to remember grace in this way. Romans chapter 12, look there at verse 4: ***For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. Having then gifts*** (That's another way of saying having grace. Grace means “gift.” It is a gift of God.) ***Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.***

In Romans chapter 1, verse 5, Paul could say, “Through Him I have received the grace of apostleship.” That's what Paul is saying, Romans chapter 1, verse 5. Let me ask you. To what end or purpose has God given grace to you? To what end or purpose has God given grace to you? What gifts has He given you? What responsibilities in your Christian life has God laid upon you? In what ways can you, could you, should you serve His cause, His body?

Paul could say, “Through Him I have received the grace of apostleship.” You might say, “Through Him I have received the grace of evangelism.” Certainly, we have. We're called to evangelize. We're called to preach the gospel. And what God commands, God supplies. Always. Always. You might say, “Through Him I've received the grace of evangelism. You might say, “I've received the grace of discipleship.” “Through Him I've received the grace of ministering to the saints.” “I've received the grace of the deaconate.” Or “I've received the grace of motherhood.” “I've received the grace of being an excellent employee with an excellent attitude.” What can you say that God has given to you? His grace, mind you, in this is no static, lifeless, empty wish. What God commands, God supplies.

Augustine made that prayer and he prayed that to God and it caused a stir. ***“God command what You will, but give what You command.”*** And Augustine – that is a prayer of faith – praying, knowing the expectation of faith that whatever God commands, God gives the power to obey it. God gives the strength to fulfill it. What God commands, God supplies.

Paul said in 1 Corinthians chapter 15, verse 10: **“...by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.”** Do you see in that statement, Paul’s balance, if you will, between grace that comes to him and responsibility as a steward of that grace? Paul received that grace and he said: **“...I labored more abundantly than they all...”** But then Paul acknowledges in that same sentence, ‘It’s not I, but the grace of God which is at work in me.’ Do you see the balance?

Brothers and sisters, **work out your own salvation with fear and trembling**, (Why? Because) **it is God who works in you both to will and to do** (according to) **His good pleasure**. Do you see the balance between the two? Listen. Don’t separate what God has put together. Let no man separate. Effectiveness, fruitfulness will come by the effective working of *His* power, not your own. And His grace is sufficient, that through His grace at work in you, you may bring glory to Him in your labors.

We stand in grace – Romans chapter 5, verse 2.

We should grow in grace – 2 Peter chapter 3, verse 18.

Grace instructs us, it teaches us – Titus chapter 2, verses 11 and 12.

Grace will reign in your life through righteousness – Romans chapter 5, verse 21.

All these concepts involved in the scope of God’s grace to believers.

1 Peter chapter 4, verse 10: ***As each one has received a gift, (Peter reminds) minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.***

God gets the glory when we serve Him in that way.

The grace of God isn’t only operative in salvation. Grace is not a onetime event. The grace of God isn’t only active at salvation. The grace of God is active in the life of the believer. That grace by which He saves us is that grace by which He enables us, by which He equips us, by which He effectively ‘works in us to will and to do according to His good pleasure.’ You and I, brothers and sisters, do not, must not receive this grace of God in vain.

2 Corinthians chapter 9, verse 8, Paul says that: ***God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work.*** God is gracious. Amen? Abounding in grace. Rich in mercy.

## 2) God’s Purpose or Our Pursuit

In verse 5, God’s provision is followed by Paul’s pursuit; which is also our pursuit, God’s purpose. In verse 5, God’s provision followed by our pursuit. Verse 5: ***Through Him we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations for His name,*** –

So, consider with me – considering Paul’s apostleship – Paul’s ministry is one set apart to the gospel. Paul then, makes reference to the immediate goal or purpose of that grace, the immediate goal or the purpose of the gospel of God, the immediate goal or the purpose of Paul’s apostolic ministry to proclaim the gospel. The word εἰς (eis) there in verse 5, is the word translated “for.” It communicates purpose – communicating purpose. Apostleship “toward,” or “looking to,” “with an eye to,” or “a purpose of” the obedience of faith. Do you see? Grace and apostleship *for* this purpose: **obedience to the faith among all nations for His name** –

In other words, verse 5, this is a summary statement of all of Paul's missionary endeavors. It's a summary statement concerning the purpose of gospel proclamation. It's a summary statement concerning the purpose of this letter. He opens the letter here in the introduction with this statement, and then he closes the letter with a similar summary statement.

Flip over to Romans chapter 16. Romans chapter 16, the very end of the letter. And look at how Paul closes this letter in verse 25. Again, another literary device here that Paul is using. Chapter 16, verse 25: ***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 kept secret since the world began but now made manifest, (Do you see the contrast there? That mystery which was once hidden, now made manifest, now made clear.) by the prophetic Scriptures made known to all nations, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, for obedience to the faith— to God, alone wise, be glory through Jesus Christ forever. Amen.***

In other words, God's plan of salvation, His plan of redemption through Jesus Christ, once a mystery, now revealed in the preaching of the gospel, has as its goal or purpose the obedience of faith. Paul sees his ministry effort, Paul sees his proclamation of the gospel now as part of a fulfillment, if you will, an end times, an eschatological fulfillment of God's eternal plan. That redemptive plan hatched in the mind of God, if you will, in eternity past before the foundation of the world; that eternal plan coming to fulfillment in the preaching of the gospel, and Paul sees his proclamation of the gospel as part of the fulfillment of God's eternal plan to bring about the obedience of faith among all nations.

Remember in Galatians chapter 3, Paul references that very same truth in Galatians chapter. From the beginning – from the beginning, the Scriptures testify that God had planned all along to save the Gentiles through faith in Jesus Christ. It's been God's plan or purpose all along. And Paul see the preaching of the gospel, his apostolic ministry in particular as a fulfillment of an eternal purpose on the part of God to save the nations for His name.

The opening and closing of this letter in this way forms another literary device called an inclusio. It's an inclusio – where everything in between these two inclusive statements, everything in between serves their purpose. Paul is writing this letter to the church at Rome to preach the gospel. He's going to preach the gospel through this letter. And that gospel has a purpose. Paul has a purpose in writing, Paul's purpose, God's purpose is obedience – the obedience of faith among all nations for the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Everything in between serves that purpose. You could say that the purpose for writing this letter is to communicate to us the gospel of God as one who has received the grace of apostleship for the purpose of obedience to the faith among all nations for His name.

So, Paul summarizes then our purpose here as obedience. That obedience is modified in verse 5 by the use of three prepositional statements. Notice them with me: 1) obedience to the faith, 2) obedience among all nations, and 3) obedience for His name. Obedience to the faith, obedience among all nations, and obedience for His name.

Let' take the first purpose statement of Paul, verse 5: ***Through Him we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith*** – The New King James here supplies the article when the article is not present in the Greek. Article is that little word "the." And what they're doing in translating it that way is they're making an interpretive decision about the text. The Greek is literally this: "grace and apostleship toward obedience of faith." There's no article. It's "toward obedience of faith."



So, now listen. Follow along with me. By supplying the article “the,” the New King James and others take verse 5 to mean that Paul was referring to obedience to the revealed content of an objective body of truth known as “the faith.” You see what they’re doing, right? In other words, it’s obedience to the Bible. It’s obedience to the Word of God revealed by God to the people of God. However, in the Greek, verse 5, there’s no article. There’s no little word “the.” So, how should we understand this? Well, if you’re reading an ESV or an NASB, they translate it “to bring about the obedience of faith.” Not “obedience of the faith,” but “the obedience of faith.” That’s a little closer to what Paul means here. In other words, the goal, or purpose, or aim of Paul’s apostolic ministry – his goal of proclaiming the gospel of God to the nations was to bring about the obedience of faith.

Now, there are several ways in which you can understand what that means, or interpret that to mean. And of the several ways which someone could consider this statement, the best options really boil down to two. For those of you thinking about the Greek – there are several of you here – one is a genitive of apposition, the other is a genitive of source. It’s a genitive of apposition or a genitive of source.

One is this: It refers to the obedience that faith produces. That statement “the obedience of faith,” either refers to the obedience that faith produces or it refers to that obedience which is faith – that obedience that consist of faith. In other words, faith is the obedience that is looked for or sought for. Does that make sense? One refers to the obedience that faith produces. In other words, the life of obedience for a Christian is the obedience of faith. It’s obedience that faith produces. In other words, you don’t obey in your own power. You don’t obey in your own will. Any obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ must be, if it’s acceptable by God, if it’s not in your own power, it is to be by faith. “That which is not of faith is sin,” the Bible says. Our obedience to Jesus Christ needs to be obedience in faith. That’s genitive of apposition.

Secondly, it could be referring to that obedience that consist of faith. In other words, faith *is* obedience. Believing the gospel is in itself an act of obedience to the gospel. Do you see? Time does not permit us to deal with this this morning. We’re going to take a pit stop in our race through Romans next week to deal with this phrase “the obedience of faith.” We’re going to work through that statement. There’s more to it there than just that. Like everything else in this introduction, it is power-packed. There’s a lot there. So, we’re going to deal with that in a specific sermon next week. Suffice it to say for now, that a good understanding of the text doesn’t require an “either/or,” and you can look at it as a “both/and.” A “both/and” is a true statement, a true understanding of “the obedience of faith.”

C. B. Cranfield, one of the commentators on this text travails a middle ground, if you will. He says this: *The obedience which God requires is faith. To obey the gospel is to believe it and to believe in Him who is its content; and to believe the gospel and believe in Christ involves obeying it, and obeying Him.*”

Now, I don’t know how many different ways Cranfield could make that statement, but listen, the gospel involves obedience; obedience to the gospel, obedience to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, obedience of faith among all nations for His name. Those that would try to divorce any inkling, any notion of any obedience from that faith through which we are justified is simply not understanding the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ! And they’re betraying the testimony of Scripture.

Failure to believe in the gospel isn’t a question of reason. Failure to believe in the gospel isn’t a question of intellect or intellectual assent. Failure to believe in the gospel is disobedience to the gospel. Failure to believe in the gospel, to turn from your sin and to trust in Christ, failure to obey the gospel is sin. The gospel isn’t merely an offer of salvation. The gospel isn’t merely an invitation to come to Christ. The gospel is a command of God to turn to Christ in faith. God has overlooked these times of ignorance, **but**

**now commands all men everywhere to repent**, – To reject the gospel is sin against God. It is a rejection of Jesus Christ Himself. It is hardhearted, willful rebellion against the Living God.

Why should you believe the gospel this morning, right now? Why should you believe? Because God commands you to believe. God commands you to believe the gospel this morning. God commands you to believe the gospel right now!

1 John chapter 3, verse 23: ***And this is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, as He gave us commandment.***

If you sit here this morning refusing to believe in the gospel, then you sit here this morning in stubborn, willful, intransigent, obstinate, hardhearted rebellion against God Almighty who made you in His image. You may think to yourself, “The time’s not right for me. I’m just not ready. Not ready to give my life to Jesus Christ. Not ready to leave those things behind that I love. Not willing to leave my sin. Not willing to commit myself in this way. There’s time.” You might think to yourself, “I’m a young man...I’m a young woman...I’m a young boy...I’m a young girl, the time’s just not right. I’m not necessarily against God. I don’t feel any bitterness or anger toward God. I’m just not ready.” You’re a liar! And you’re lying to yourself. You are to this point – having sat under the preaching of God’s Word, having sat under the proclamation of God’s gracious gospel – you are to this point, if you’ve not turned from your sin to entrust yourself to Jesus Christ alone for salvation, then you are a tenacious, dogged, persistent, obstinate, hell-bound son of the devil. That’s the Bible’s testimony of you.

And listen to me, young boy, young girl, the Bible doesn’t exempt you because you are a young boy or a young girl. If you’re in this room, you’re old enough to understand these truths. You’re old enough to understand what God is calling you to do. God is calling you to turn from your sin and to put faith and trust in Jesus Christ; to give your life to Him, to love Him, to serve Him, to live for Him, to trust Him for salvation from sin and from the wrath of God. Do you see? Why will you die? ‘God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked man would turn from his way and live.’

So then, when God commands you to believe in the gospel, when God commands you to believe the Good News, what is He commanding you to do? What is He commanding you to do? He is commanding you to believe that He has sent His Son into the world to save sinners, and to believe that you are a wretched and hell-deserving sinner. He is commanding you to believe that Jesus Christ, His Son died on the cross to bear the sins of His people, that He might redeem them from the curse of the Law. And He is commanding you to believe that you are under the curse of the Law, facing a certain, terrifying expectation of judgment, deserving of eternal wrath, and that apart from His sacrifice alone for your sin, you will bear your own sin in death and damnation. And God is commanding you to believe that He has raised His Son from the dead that His righteousness can be your righteousness. His perfect life can be your perfect life. His sacrifice for sin, your sacrifice for sin. That His resurrection from the dead can be your resurrection from the dead. And that His glory can be your glory forever and ever.

He’s commanding you to believe that in Him God will forgive you of all your sin, God will declare you to be righteous, that God will unite you to His Son; more than that, He will adopt you as His son. He will give you an inheritance with all the saints. He will sanctify you, and cleanse you, and grow you, and mature you. He’ll change you and transform you. He’ll transform your heart. He’ll transform your mind. He’ll transform your desires. He’ll transform affections. He’ll transform everything about you. He will change you from the inside out, and make you a trophy of His grace. God promises to do that in the gospel.

He commands you to believe Him. He commands you to entrust yourself to Him. He commands you to believe that He will receive you as one of His own for the sake of His Son. What a tremendous testimony of the ignorance, and wickedness, and rebellion of men that they reject such a gracious command. You can't work for it. You can't earn it. You can't muster up enough grit or willpower to lay hold of it. He commands you to believe it. It's awesome, isn't it?! The greatest news that anyone has ever contemplated, or had the grace to hear, or that has been laid upon the ears of men. He commands you to believe it. And He commands men and women, boys and girls among all nations for the sake, for the name of His Son our Lord Jesus Christ.

What will you do? What will you do? Will you again, sit here in rejection of that grace? Will you again, turn your back on His offer, His invitation, His command. Will you turn your back on Jesus Christ?

'Now then, I am an ambassador for Christ, as though God were pleading through me: I implore you on Christ behalf, be reconciled to God.'

Let's pray.