

Sermons through

Romans

Beloved Saints – Grace and Peace

Romans 1:7

With Study Questions

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Romans 1:7

Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called *to be* an apostle, separated to the gospel of God ² which He promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures, ³ concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, ⁴ and declared *to be* the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead. ⁵ Through Him we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations for His name, ⁶ among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ; ⁷ 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.
(Romans 1:1-7).

Introduction

How do you address people when writing them a letter, text or e-mail? And with what thought do you leave them? I am always interested in the various types of greetings and sign-offs in correspondence I receive. From the very cold and business-like “To Whom it May Concern” followed by “Sincerely” to “Dear Pastor” followed by “In Christ.” I must say I wrestle with how I address people and what final thought I leave them with. Here, in verse seven, we read that which might be considered the apex of Paul’s salutation. Seventeenth century theologian Francis Turretin wrote:

The ancient Greeks and Romans wished to those to whom they wrote, in the inscription of their epistles, health, joy, happiness; but Paul prays for far higher blessings even the *favor* of God, the fountain of all good things, and *peace*, in which the Hebrews included all blessings. – Ed.¹

¹ Calvin, J. (1998). *Calvin's Commentaries: Romans* (electronic ed.). Logos Library System; Calvin's Commentaries. Albany, OR: Ages Software.

Review

In quick review we see Paul a Bondservant holding the office of apostle – an office that ended with the last witnesses of the resurrected Christ. Paul was set apart for the gospel of God promised in the Old Testament Scriptures – a message from the beginning of history – a message **“concerning 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 according to the Spirit of holiness by the resurrection from the dead – fully God and fully man fulfilling all the promises of the Messiah – of the redemption of the world.

Paul received grace and apostleship for **“obedience of the faith for the sake of his name among all the nations”** – that is, the call to faith should not merely be viewed as an invitation but as a moral obligation to yield to a legitimate and benevolent authority and there is no territory (whether geographical, institutional or philosophical) outside of His holy jurisdiction. Paul now completes his salutation:

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 (Romans 1:7).

All in Rome

Paul writes to **“all who are in Rome.”** In a world of electronic media, I must say that I still enjoy a good old fashioned letter in the mailbox. I walk up to the house and see a stash of envelopes. I rifle through the junk and the bills in hopes of seeing a hand written envelope (hopefully with some indication that it’s a friendly letter – like a sticker or something) with my name on it. It’s personal.

Paul is not writing merely to the elders or deacons but to all. Similar to his letter to Philippi where it’s addressed **“To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the overseers and deacons” (Philippians 1:1)**. Not merely the overseers and deacons but to all.

To a person we are to take these words of Paul (more specifically – the Spirit of God) as directed to us – these words containing the most intensely personal and profoundly critical dynamics affecting our very souls. How quickly we might race home if it came to our attention that

there was a letter from God to us waiting in our mailbox. What might that letter say?

Beloved of God

How comforting to receive the sentiment from our Creator, King and Judge that we are His beloved. **“To all who are in Rome,”** Paul writes, **“beloved of God.”** It may be the greatest commandment for us to love God (Matthew 22:37), but the greatest source of human comfort is not found in the depth of our love for God but His love for us.

Many years ago I recall speaking with a very fine Christian man who was headed for the ministry. He offered me a very succinct reflection of his objective as a pastor – “All I want” he explained “was to get people to love Jesus.” It was an honorable quest. But in time I came to believe that prior to that would be the message of God’s love for us. I might alter the objective to “All I want (not really “all” but first and foremost) is to get Christians to understand God’s love for us.”

Paul addresses the church as those who “beloved of God.” In chapter nine Paul will explain how this is not generic to humanity, but rather the result of an act of God’s free grace.

As indeed he says in Hosea, “Those who were not my people I will call ‘my people,’ and her who was not beloved I will call ‘beloved (Romans 9:25).

Man is conceived in rebellion (Psalm 51:1) then becomes God’s beloved by the power and love of God through the cross of Christ. The love of God extended to unworthy creatures as a result of grace alone and nothing seen in them by God, either past, present or future, as we shall soon see, should not be approached as a cloak for vice (1 Peter 2:16) or license for sin. But the love God has for us in Christ (above all things and distinct from all things) should be the table and hearth where cold and weak sojourners find food and warmth for their souls.

But the comforted and well-fed saint should not remain idle. The answer to Question One of the Heidelberg presents glorious overtures of our peace and comfort with God found in what He alone has done for us.

But the last line in the answer begins to inform us of what that grace produces vis-a-vis the inclination of the human heart:

Question One: What is your only comfort in life and in death?

Answer: That I am not my Own, but belong body and soul, in life and in death-to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ.

He has fully paid for all my sins with his precious blood, and has set me free from the tyranny of the devil.

He also watches over me in such a way that not a hair can fall from my head without the will of my Father in heaven: in fact, all things must work together for my salvation.

Because I belong to him, Christ, by his Holy Spirit, assures me of eternal life and makes me wholeheartedly willing and ready from now on to live for him.

It is in light of God's love for us that we seek to love Him, live for Him. Our love for God is distinct from His love for us – it is not like human relationships where our eyes met and a mutual love was nurtured. No, His love for us has no assignable cause except His own good pleasure. But the assurance that we are His – that these words of being “beloved of God” actually apply to us – in terms of human experience is our faith in Him (Romans 8:16) and our God-given willingness to live for Him.

Called to be Holy

We find this in Paul's words “**called to be saints.**” Calvin states that we are to “aspire to holiness, for he hath not called us to uncleanness, but to holiness.” It is in light of our behavior that Paul writes to the Thessalonians that “**God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness**” (1 Thessalonians 4:7.)

It is the power of God's grace alone that every last believer in Christ is called a "saint" (Ephesians 1:1). Perhaps we don't think of ourselves as saints since the church, long ago, created a classification of super Christian who are particularly given that designation. But if we are in Christ and if in viewing us, God sees the righteousness of His own Son (2 Corinthians 5:21), how can we be anything but saints?

But what we see along with the free gift of sainthood is that call to be saints (or the call to be holy, being the same root word: *hagios*). To the Corinthians Paul writes:

To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours (1 Corinthians 1:2).

Believers are both called holy and called to be holy. As Peter writes:

but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct,¹⁶ since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy (1 Peter 1:15, 16).

Having been made holy is always accompanied by being made holy.

For by a single offering he has perfected (perfect tense – having been made holy) for all time those who are being sanctified (present passive – something God continues to produce in us) (Hebrews 10:14 parenthesis mine).

In one respect we are "new creation" in Christ, the "old has passed away" (2 Corinthians 5:17). But in another sense we are called to "put off our old self, which belongs to the former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires" (Ephesians 4:22). Writing to the Colossians, Paul calls the saints to a certain behavior:

But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth.⁹ Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its

practices ¹⁰ and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. ¹¹ Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all. ¹² Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, ¹³ bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive (Colossians 3:8-13).

Christians are both holy and called to be holy. We are made in the image of God but are also being "renewed" after that image. Words worth considering by Calvin:

Here a rich truth presents itself to us, to which I shall briefly refer, and leave it to be meditated upon by each individual: Paul does by no means ascribe the praise of our salvation to ourselves, but derives it altogether from the fountain of God's free and paternal love towards us; for he makes this the first thing – God loves us: and what is the cause of his love, except his own goodness alone? On this depends our calling, by which in his own time he seals his adoption to those whom he had before freely chosen. We also learn from this passage that none rightly connect themselves with the number of the faithful, except they feel assured that the Lord is gracious, however unworthy and wretched sinners they may be, and except they be stimulated by his goodness and aspire to holiness, for he hath not called us to uncleanness, but to holiness. (1 Thessalonians 4:7.)²

Grace and Peace

We can see, in light of the continual call to holiness the need for Grace – meaning kindness, and especially the underserved kindness seen in the unmerited goodness of God in saving and refining sinners. The

² Calvin, J. (1998). *Calvin's Commentaries: Romans* (electronic ed.). Logos Library System; Calvin's Commentaries (Ro 1:7). Albany, OR: Ages Software.

church should never be thought of as a stagnant pond. If so, it will eventually evaporate and become no good to itself or others.

No, the church is to be a vibrant stream of living waters. It is a place of wrestling and contending – a place ever in need of the grace of God. **“Grace,”** Charles Hodge states, **“includes everything that we can desire or need, the favour of God, and all the blessing that favour secures.”**³

And anyone who has ever served in the ministry recognizes the dependence upon God for *peace*, yes even in the church; this peace, first and foremost emanating from our peace with God. As Paul will later write:

Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,² through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God (Romans 5:1, 2).

To the Colossians he also writes:

...and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross (Colossians 1:20).

It is from that peace that we can begin to anticipate **“the peace of God...which guards our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus”** (Philippians 4:7) and peace within the body of Christ itself (Ephesians 2:15).

From God – From Christ

Finally Paul isolates the source of this grace and peace with the words **“from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”** So important in our day of multiple authorities, all seeking our primary allegiance and affection, to recognize the One true God from whom all blessings flow.

“From God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.” **“Nothing”** it has been said,

³ Charles Hodge, Commentary on Romans. Pp. 23, 24.

speaks more decisively for the divinity of Christ than these juxtapositions of Christ with the eternal God, which run through the whole language of Scripture, and the derivation of purely divine influences from Him also. The name of no man can be placed by the side of the Almighty. He only, in whom the Word of the Father who is Himself God became flesh, may be named beside Him; for men are commanded to honor Him even as they honor the Father (Jn 5:23) [Olshausen].⁴

⁴ Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., Fausset, A. R., Brown, D., & Brown, D. (1997). *A commentary, critical and explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments* (Ro 1:7). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

Questions for Study

1. How do you greet and sign off in your correspondence? Why (page 2)?
2. Review Paul's salutation. What do you find particularly significant (pages 2, 3)?
3. How should we personally view the Scriptures? Why is it important (page 3)?
4. Why do you think knowing we are "beloved of God" is more of a priority than our loving God (pages 3, 4)?
5. Does knowing that we are beloved of God mean it's okay to live a life of sin (pages 4, 5)?
6. Why does God love us (pages 4, 5)?
7. Are all Christians saints? Are all Christians called to be saints? Explain (pages 5, 6).
8. Define grace and peace. If Christians are already saved, why do they need grace and peace (pages 6, 7)?
9. Is Jesus God? Why is that important (page 7)?