

## **What is the Focus, Foundation & Final Goal of the Gospel?**

Romans 1:1-7

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*Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations, including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ. - Romans 1:1-6, ESV*

"God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life." This is the opening line in a popular presentation of the Gospel. Another begins, "Have you come to the place in your spiritual life where you know, for sure, that if you were to die tonight, you would go to heaven?"

Opening lines like these have the advantage of getting the attention of the audience and making them interested in hearing more. Unfortunately, the strength of these openings is also their weakness. People are interested in these openings because the focus is placed on them, and so they reinforce a universal human bias: Your life and your eternal destiny are most centrally important.

This is not how the Bible begins, and it is not how the Gospels begin. Contrast these popular openings with famous openings in the Bible:

*"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." - Genesis 1:1*

*"The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham." - Matthew 1:1*

*"The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." - Mark 1:1*

*"In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God and the word was God." - John 1:1*

The focus in these openings is quite different: It is on God and His activity or on Jesus Christ and His person and work.

The book of Romans has a similar God-centered, Christ-exalting opening. While Paul begins by identifying himself, even his identity is tied up in Christ. He is "*a servant of Jesus Christ.*" Then Paul identifies his mission as an apostle with the gospel of God. The gospel is the good news of what God has done, is doing and will do through Jesus Christ. This is why the gospel is "*concerning his Son.*"

The gospel is not first and foremost a message about God's wonderful plan for your life, nor is it first a message about how you can be sure that you're going to heaven. The gospel is "*the good news of God . . . concerning his Son.*"

The focus of the gospel is clearly fixed on Jesus Christ. The foundation of the gospel rests on the promise of God, given "*through his prophets in the holy Scriptures.*" In fulfillment of these Scriptures, the Gospel proclaims Jesus, who "*was descended from David according to the flesh and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead.*"

We will see this repeatedly throughout this wonderful book: The gospel is all about Jesus, who He is and what he has done. He is the Son of David and the Son of God. He rose again from the dead. He fulfilled the promises of the Holy Scriptures.

The final goal of the gospel is "*to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations.*" In other words, the gospel proclaims the good news about Jesus so that people all over the world may put their faith in Jesus in obedience to God and to the glory of His name.

Perhaps this is the reason why the real gospel is always controversial and divisive: The gospel is not all about you! You are not the focus. You are not the foundation. Your glory is not the final goal. But the source of the controversy is also what makes the gospel truly good news: I don't need a boost to my self-esteem or self-exaltation. I don't need more of me. I need Jesus. Through the gospel, God does not give me what I want, He gives me what I need, and that is good news indeed!