

June 3, 2007

## Romans: Paul's Description of Himself

**Rom. 1:1**

### Introduction

As we return to our study of the book of Romans, the last two sermons have been introductions to the study of this great epistle

In the first sermon we focused upon its author, the apostle Paul

We considered his cultural, educational and religious background and his spiritual condition before his dramatic conversion to Christ

Last time the focus was upon the original recipients of this letter; the Christians in Rome

And we also considered some of the reasons that Paul wrote this epistle

Well having completed our general introduction, we are ready now to begin our study of the contents of this epistle

And this brings us to the introductory section of the letter which begins with what is called a salutation

Or an opening greeting

This is what we have in vv.1-7

Now there are a couple of things very striking about the salutation of Romans

First of all, when compared to the salutations in the other epistles of Paul, this one is much longer

His salutations are usually rather short, but this one is quite long

Something else very striking is the theological depth of it as compared to his other salutations

It's amazing the amount of weighty doctrine Paul packs into these first seven verses

All of this is probably best accounted for by the fact that in Romans, as you remember, Paul is writing to a church that neither he nor any of his associates had planted

And it's a church that Paul had, in fact, never visited

At least most of these people had never met Paul, though they had probably heard of him

And this may be the reason that he felt the need to give a more lengthy introduction of himself...

And also to state in compact form right at the very beginning his apostolic authority and mission and the gospel that he preaches

So it's a very interesting salutation and it's not something to just brush over too quickly

There is always the temptation to do that when it comes these introductory sections

I remember when I was a little boy and my Dad was teaching me how to trout fish....

### Explain

Well so it is with Paul's epistles

*Jeffery Smith June 3, 2007*

We may want to rush on to the deep, as it were, or to something we know is taken up later that we're very interested in  
But this is a mistake

Because Paul is not just engaging in the niceties of proper etiquette and good letter writing manners in his salutations

Everything he writes is written with deliberation and under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit

And if we just skip over these sections we'll miss many things that are of great value and blessing to us as God's people

These first seven verses can be divided up under four major headings

If you'll look over the passage as I've give these headings, I think you'll easily see these four divisions

First, Paul gives a summary description of himself (v.1)

Followed by a summary description of his subject or his message (vv.2-4)

Followed by a summary description of his mission(v.5)

Followed by a summary description of the people to whom he is writing(vv.6-7)

And then he gives his usual apostolic greeting at the end of v.7

Well this evening our focus will be upon the first of these divisions

And, God willing, we'll at least begin to consider the second

So we begin with...

## I. **Paul's Summary Description of Himself**

We have a three-fold description; three statements

First of all...

### A. **Paul Describes Himself As A Bondservant Of Jesus Christ**

"So this is who I am", Paul says

First and foremost I am a bondservant of Jesus Christ

This is the most fundamental thing about me

This is the first thing, I am bondservant of Jesus Messiah

The more literal translation would be "bond-slave of Jesus Christ"

Now there are many other ways Paul could have introduced himself

He was a man with a long list of credentials, as well as a long list of accomplishments

Explain-to put it in today's language he could have introduced himself perhaps as.....etc....

But no, Paul refers to himself, literally as a slave, doulos; bondservant of Jesus Christ

Now what does this mean? Why does he describe himself this way?

Well, I think Paul speaks of himself this way, **first of all**, simply to identify himself as a Christian

The first thing that is true of me is I'm a Christian

*Jeffery Smith June 3, 2007*

I'm writing to you as one who is completely at the disposal of Jesus Christ  
 One who has received of his grace and has gladly yielded up my life to Him

And what Paul says of himself here is true of every genuine Christian  
 This is one of the ways a Christian is described, "a bond-slave of Jesus Christ"

And this is just one of many reasons that this whole teaching that says that you can believe in Christ, first, as your Savior  
 But then, perhaps, years later you may take him as your Lord, is a complete denial of the scriptures

No, from the moment he saves you he is your Lord  
 And one of the evidences that he has saved you is that you gladly embrace him as your Lord

What about you this evening?  
 Can you refer to yourself as "a bond-slave of Jesus Christ"?

**Secondly**, Paul in describing himself in this way is also revealing his attitude toward the Lord Jesus  
 He's not his bond-slave only in fact, but in spirit also

This is his greatest delight  
 This is the way *he likes* to describe himself; he's glad about this, he's happy about this

He is constantly describing himself this way in his epistles  
 He is delighted with this great reality that he belongs to Jesus Christ

As he says in another place, "I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me"  
 Or in another place, "For to me to live is Christ"

In Pp. 3:12 he speaks of himself as a man, not only who has laid hold of Christ, but Christ has laid hold of him  
 He has captured me, as it were

Christ has captured my heart  
 He is a bond-slave in the sense that a person in love is a bond-slave to the one he loves

In another place, as he speaks of his service to Christ, he says, "For the love of Christ constrains me"  
 I am bound, I am his slave, but I'm a slave of love

That's what Paul is talking about when he refers to himself as a bond-slave of Jesus Christ  
 Now again this is very good way of testing our Christianity

For the apostle Paul the person of Jesus Christ was the center of everything in his life  
 This comes out so clearly in his epistles

For example in these first seven verses of Romans, Christ is referred to by name, pronoun, title or descriptive phrase 8 times

“Christ Jesus”, v.1; “His Son”, “Jesus Christ our Lord”, “descendant of David”, v.3; “Son of God”, v.4; “Him”, v.5; “For His name”, v.5; “Jesus Christ”, v.6

And this is just the beginning  
We see this in all of his epistles

In the first fourteen verses of the epistle to the Ephesians he mentions Christ fifteen times  
He relates everything to the person and work of Jesus Christ

Even when he’s writing about very practical subjects, Christ is at the center of it all  
Take for example Paul’s first epistle to the Corinthians

In that epistle he takes up one practical problem or issue after another  
And with every issue he relates it to the person and work of Christ

When he reproves divisions in the church he says, “Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you, or were you baptized into the name of Paul?”

When enforcing the duty of maintaining purity of discipline in the church, he uses this plea, “Purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you are truly unleavened. For indeed Christ our Passover, was sacrificed for us”

When he pleads with Corinthians to give generously for the poor saints in Jerusalem, here is his main argument, “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might be rich”

Well we could go on and on

Go through the rest of this epistle; go through all of his epistles, and this is what you’ll see  
Paul was a love-slave of Jesus Christ and Christ was central and foremost in his thinking and in all of his teaching

Again, I say, that this is good way to test the quality of our Christianity...  
What place does Christ really have in your life?

I’m not just talking about the doctrine of Christ, but the real living person of Christ  
Explain- Many of us understand...etc...

That’s good, I don’t mean to depreciate that  
But do you love Jesus?

Are your thoughts often occupied with him?  
When you talk to one another do you ever talk about him?

Is he in your thoughts, on your tongue, in your affections?  
Do you think of yourself in the way Paul thought of himself?  
I am a bond-slave of Jesus Christ

There’s a **third reason** I think Paul describes himself this way, first, in this context  
And that is that he’s preparing the way for the second description of himself that he’s about to give

On the one hand, I'm simply a Christian, just like the rest of you Roman Christians  
I'm just a bond-slave of Jesus Christ in common with all of you

But Paul writes to them as something more than that  
Notice, secondly, now he says...

### **B. Called To Be An Apostle**

I write to you as a bondservant of Jesus Christ  
But I also write to you as an apostle of Jesus Christ  
So he first describes himself in terms of his master

But now he describes himself in terms of his divinely conferred office  
Now what does this mean and what's the significance of this?  
It's very important for us to understand this?

What is an apostle?

Well the Greek word translated "apostle" literally means, "one sent forth"

And occasionally, very rarely, it's simply used in a general manner to refer to a messenger or a missionary....

You might say an apostle with a small letter "a"

But most often it's used in the N.T. to refer to the office of an Apostle  
An office to which men were called and appointed

There's much confusion sometimes about the office of apostle  
And you even have people today who claim to be apostles or to have apostolic authority or to exercise apostolic gifts  
So let's consider this for a few moments

**First of all**, the unique qualifications for the apostolate  
What was necessary to qualify for the office of Apostle?  
Well at least three things

*First*, you had to have seen the risen Lord  
You had to be an eye-witness of the resurrection

This is clear in several places  
For example turn over to Acts 1:21(explain the context etc..)  
Read-vv.21-22

You see, you couldn't be an apostle unless you had seen the risen Christ  
Someone says, "But what about Paul, doesn't that disqualify him?"

No, Paul saw the risen Christ on the road to Damascus  
Now there were always those in his own day who tried to say that Paul wasn't an apostle

Especially false teachers, like the Judaizers  
At times Paul was forced to defend his apostleship

*Jeffery Smith June 3, 2007*

And this is one of the points he makes when he does that

1 Cor. 9:1, "Am I not an apostle? Am I not free? Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord"

1 Cor. 15:8, "Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time

**A second qualification** to be an apostle is that you had to have been directly called and appointed to that office by Christ Himself

This was the case with the original twelve

For example we read in Lk.6:12-13, speaking of Jesus, "Now it came to pass in those days that He went out to the mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, He called His disciples to Himself; and from them He chose twelve whom He also named apostles"

You see, "apostle" is not just another name for "disciple"

No, all Christians are disciples of Christ

But from among his disciples, Jesus chose twelve to be apostles

And the same thing happened to Paul

Not only was he converted on the road to Damascus, he was also called by Christ to be an apostle

We read in Paul's account of that experience before Agrippa that Jesus said to him, "For I have appeared to you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness both of the things which you have seen and of the things which I will yet reveal to you. I will deliver you from the Jewish people, as well as from the Gentiles, to whom I now send you"

He was called as an official sent one, an official apostle of Jesus Christ and eye witness of his resurrection

**A third mark** of an apostle was that they possessed a unique supernatural endowment of the Holy Spirit for two closely related purposes

*First*, in order to enable them to speak the very Word of God by divine inspiration as the representatives of Christ

Remember Jesus was speaking specifically to the apostles when he says in Jn.16:12ff, "I have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come. He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak of His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come"

Paul could write of himself in 1 Cor. 14:37ff, "If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord"

His writings are on the same level as the commandments of the Lord

He spoke by divine inspiration and by direct revelation

He could write to the Galatians, "But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ"

Explain- when I stand up here to preach....I'm not...etc...

But, you see, the apostles were authorized to speak by divine inspiration as the unique representatives of Jesus Christ to the church

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*And this special endowment of the Spirit was also given to them in order to enable them to back up the divine authority of their words with supernatural signs and wonders*

Things such as being able to impart spiritual gifts to others by the laying on of their hands  
The performing of miracles and healings and so on

What the bible specifically refers to as “the signs of an apostle”

For example, Paul, again defending his apostleship to the Corinthians, writes in 2 Cor. 12:12, “Truly the signs of an apostle were accomplished among you with all perseverance in signs and wonders and mighty deeds”

So this unusual supernatural endowment of the Spirit was granted by Christ to the Apostles...

So that what they wrote and have handed down to us in our bibles was written by divine inspiration and is the very word of God

And in confirmation of their unique authority they were enabled to perform the signs of an apostle

Now this is why when the early church compiled the official documents of the N.T. there were many writings that were left out

There were certainly many Christian writings around by then, but they were not included in the Canon

Comment- By the way....new gospel...ancient document

There's a reason many things that may have been written in the early history of the church were not included in the Canon

Unless a document was a Gospel or an Epistle that was written by an Apostle or one of his associates....

Unless it could be traced back to an apostle, either directly or indirectly, and thus had apostolic authority, it was not included

So the apostolate was a unique office that was given unique authority by Jesus Christ

Now what are some practical lessons that we can learn from this

Well, **first of all**, this tells us that anyone who comes along today claiming to be an apostle is a liar

Can there be any Apostles today? No!!

And one reason is that the qualifications for the office of Apostle are historically unique and unrepeatable

You had to be an eye-witness of the resurrected Christ and you had to be face to face, directly called and appointed to the office by Christ Himself

Therefore there is no one who qualifies

The qualifications are historically unique and unrepeatable

And remember the words of Paul in Eph. 2:20

He tells us that the church is “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets”

Explain- the revelatory foundation of the church already been laid..etc..

So not only are the qualifications to be an apostle historically unique and unrepeatable....

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Since the formation and completion of the N.T. Canon there is no longer any need for apostles

We already have the finished and completed revelation of Jesus Christ in the scriptures

And since the living apostolate no longer exists, and since the scriptures are completed, the signs of an apostle are no longer necessary either

So it shouldn't surprise that after the death of the apostles those signs ceased

With the exception, of course, of various fanatical groups who have popped up from time to time in the history of the church who have tried to resurrect them and to claim to have them

So learn from this

Don't be deceived by someone who claims to be an apostle

Or, if they don't actually call themselves an apostle, they claim to receive direct revelations from God and to perform the signs of an apostle

We have a lot a people around today who are making claims like that

They're all over the television

But don't be deceived by them

They're imposters; they're not true apostles of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ

But, having said that, Paul was a true apostle, as we get back to our text

And he doesn't want these Roman Christians to forget that, so he reminds them of it right here at the beginning of this letter

This is intended to remind them, and to remind us, that this epistle is not like any old letter any Christian in general might decide to write

This is not merely a human book

It is a message from God to us

It is the very Word of God

This letter comes to us with the authority of Jesus Christ behind it

People today don't like authority

They especially don't like it when people make absolute truth claims

But God's word doesn't come to us as a mere option out of many valid choices

And this epistle doesn't come to us merely as Paul's personal opinion

Or as the early church's opinion about these things

Paul writes this epistle as an apostle of Jesus Christ

And, therefore, this comes to us as God's infallible authoritative word for you, and for me, and for everyone in God's world

We must embrace the gospel that is revealed in this book

And not merely because we think it's good for us and we like it

"Oh well it's works for me"

"It may not work for you, but that's okay. It's good for me"

*Jeffery Smith June 3, 2007*



No, you must embrace this gospel, not merely because it seems good to you  
But because it's true

If it's not true, it's not good  
And if it is true, it's always true and it's true for everybody

Again our postmodern culture is not very comfortable with that  
"That sounds like authoritarianism to me", they say

But, my dear friends, listen, true divine authority is the only thing that will save us and save this world from authoritarianism

Think with me, without such a thing as absolute transcendent truth that never changes, we are left with a situation in which "might makes right"

We are all left to the tyranny of a fifty percent plus one majority  
What is right is simply determined by what the majority of people think is right or feel is right or think is best for their own self interest  
And the rest are expected to tow the politically correct line, or else

You see, it's the denial absolute truth that leads to authoritarianism and tyranny  
It is recognizing that there is such a thing as absolute truth and that absolute truth is found in God's word, that leads to life and stability and true freedom

So let us settle it from the very beginning that this epistle comes to us with divine apostolic authority and is the unchanging absolute truth of God  
"Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle", and then, thirdly...

### **C. Separated To The Gospel of God**

Here Paul speaks of the purpose for which he had been called to be an apostle  
That calling involved his being separated to the gospel of God

Or it could be translated, "set apart for the gospel of God"  
So he has described himself in terms of his master, his office, and now his purpose

Set apart for the gospel of God  
Now it's here that the transition is made in Paul's salutation from his summary description of himself to, secondly...

## **II. His Summary Description Of His Subject Or Message**

Now with this word "gospel" we are confronted with the major theme of Paul's epistle to the Romans

The word "gospel"(euangelion) and the verb euangelizomai (to evangelize) are especially prominent in the first seventeen verses of this epistle, or the introduction  
And the also in the conclusion of this epistle, thus forming something of a bracket around the whole

This is Paul's theme, the gospel, as we'll see  
So this is overall theme of this entire letter

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But here in his salutation he introduces it already, for the first time

He gives a brief summary, and yet a very profound summary description of his subject and of his message

He describes it in terms of its basic nature, "gospel"

Its divine origin, "the gospel of God"

Its antiquity, "promised before through the prophets in the Holy Scriptures"(v.2)

And its central figure, "Concerning His Son Jesus Christ"...and so on(vv.3-4)

Obviously, I'm not going to be able to cover all of that in the brief time remaining this evening

But I do want to say something with respect to the first point

In giving this summary of his message, notice Paul first describes it in terms of its basic nature

"It is gospel"; "it is the gospel"

I pointed out a moment ago that Paul writes as an apostle

This letter comes to us with apostolic authority

It comes with the authority of Christ behind it

And I commented about how people get uncomfortable when you start talking about authority

But here Paul reminds us that the authoritative message that he brings is not something to be afraid of

It's not something bad and gloomy and dark and depressing that if truly understood and embraced will make men miserable

No, it is gospel; it is the gospel of God

What does this word "gospel" mean?

It means good news, that's what it means

Now I think we all know that, but this is the very thing we so easily tend to forget

As one has commented, "We turn up our dictionaries and we find that the gospel means good news, and we stop at that..We end with the letter, and we have never succeeded at arriving at the spirit"

In other words, "If we say that we know the gospel means good news, the really important question, therefore, is whether the gospel has come to us as good news"

For Paul his message was good news, it was *the* good news

He was thrilled about it, he rejoiced in it, he was eager to tell others about this wonderful good news

Remember how the angel described it at the birth of Christ, "Behold I bring you glad tidings of great joy"

That's how the message of the gospel is described, "glad tidings of great joy"

Now again this raises a very important question

If this is the nature of the Christian message, has it ever come to you in that way?

Can you honestly say right now, this evening, that the gospel of Christ is the greatest, the best, the most wonderful good news that you have ever heard?

If you're hesitant to say that, or you're in doubt about that, that's a very bad sign, my friend

You may have good reason to doubt if you're even a Christian at all

And, yet, I would venture to say that there are many people sitting on the pews of Christian churches who have heard the gospel many times..

But if they were honest it's never struck them in this way

"Good news, glad tidings of great joy, the greatest, the most wonderful good news I've even heard"

They see others who seem to respond to the gospel in that way

They see others who seem to feel that way and have this joy and excitement about the gospel

But, if they're honest, they just don't get it

They know the facts of the gospel, but it's never really come to them in this way and struck them in this way

Perhaps they've even been troubled by this at times

Why is this?

Well the apostle Paul is going to be opening up this good news in this epistle

And he's going to be showing us how and why this message is, indeed, glad tidings of great joy

And in doing so we also learn why the gospel doesn't have that effect on some people

If you're here, and you're not aware of the fact, or you've never truly felt in your heart, that the gospel is the greatest good news that has ever come into this world.....

The most joyous news your ears have ever heard...

There are several reasons why this may be so that are indicated in this epistle to the Romans

Let me mention two...

**First of all**, it may be because you've never seen yourself as a sinner deserving the wrath of God, headed for hell and unable to do anything to save yourself

If you've never seen yourself in that way, you've never really understood the good news of the gospel

That's the first thing Paul addresses in this epistle

Again his great theme is the gospel

Concerning the gospel, he's been appointed an Apostle(v.1)

Concerning the gospel he feels himself a debtor(v.14)

He's eager to preach the gospel(v.15)

And then he gives the distilled essence of the theme of the entire book in vv.16-17

Read-vv.16-17

There's my great theme, I'm appointed an apostle with respect to the gospel

I feel myself indebted to the gospel, I've never had occasion to be ashamed of the gospel....

Now he's got our appetite all whetted up and we say, "Paul what is this gospel?"

Well now that he's got our ears up, he says, "Alright I'm going to expound this gospel to you  
And where does he begin?"

Look at your bibles, v.18 (read)

Oh but Paul you don't start the gospel with the wrath of God, you'll turn people away

That's not psychologically sound, I mean you've got to appeal to people's felt needs

Now back in the days of the Puritans when they had this mentality that God is a Holy God sitting upon a throne, could talk about the wrath of God

But this is the twenty first century and we have to find a point of contact with men's felt needs

And ours is day of purposeless and a sense of the loss of identity and self esteem and we've got to appeal to the sensitivities of the modern mind  
Rubbish!!

Paul says, you want to know what the gospel is?

You want to understand why the gospel is good news?

Well you never will until you come to grips with the wrath of God

And this is the focus of the rest of chapter one, the entirety of ch. 2, down to v.20 of ch. 3

Paul sets out to demonstrate and to prove that all men by nature, Jews and Gentiles alike, are sinners against God

There are no exceptions; there is none righteous, no not one

We are all sinners, justly condemned, and the wrath of God is hanging over our heads

And there is absolutely nothing we can do by our own efforts to save ourselves

That's the backdrop of Paul's gospel, that's where it begins

And unless, or until you, understand that and feel that about yourself the gospel will never be to you glad tidings of great joy

It's only after setting forth man's plight as a sinner under the wrath of God that Paul says in ch.3:21, "But now"

And then against that backdrop he begins to set forth the good news

The good news that by his suffering and death Christ bore the wrath of God that sinners deserve in their place

That God has set forth His Son as a propitiation by His blood, through faith...that God might be just and the justifier of the those who have faith in Jesus"

Now we need to be reminded of this because we live in an area that is marked by a Madison Avenue evangelism and decisionism and that is sending multitudes to hell

A kind of evangelism that fails to seriously address and expose men's sins

An evangelism that says nothing about seeing your sin as offensive to God

Nothing about your sin, and you the sinner, deserving the wrath of God and being justly exposed to and under that wrath

This is the kind of evangelism that has produced a poor lost generation of church members or crusade statistics who have some kind of fuzzy sentimental notions about the love of God  
 But they have never seen their sin as offensive to God, their consciences have never been made sensitive to the claims of God and his law

And they have never felt the sense of oughtness with respect to that law and the sense of being exposed to and deserving of God's wrath for violating that law  
 And consequently they have never felt their desperate need of Christ...

Not merely as some kind of psychological guru or help to self fulfillment  
 But their need of Him and His bloody sacrifice as the propitiation for their sins

And it's no wonder that after they've made their "decision" they soon show themselves to be cold, dead, lifeless professors  
 With no evidence of ongoing attachment to Christ in heartfelt love and devotion

Men and women and young people who cannot honestly say that the gospel of Christ is the greatest, the most wonderful news in the whole world that they have ever heard  
 That it is glad tidings of great joy to their souls

I know of but one canned gospel presentation, as it were, in the bible, and it's the book of Romans  
 And where does the apostle Paul begin?

Well he doesn't begin where most modern tracts begin, "God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life"  
 He begins with the wrath of God and with exposing men's sinful condition and inability to save themselves

Apart from understanding that and feeling it in some measure about yourself in your own soul, the gospel will never be to you glad tidings of great joy (ex. Bethan Lloyd-Jones)  
 But there's another reason indicated in this epistle that there may be a lack of rejoicing in the good news of the gospel....

**Secondly**, there are those who seem to think that the gospel is a message about something that we must do to make ourselves right with God  
 Perhaps you are troubled in some measure by you sins and you have a certain fear of the wrath of God

But when you hear about Christianity and about the gospel you think it's a message about trying to make yourself better  
 An appeal to men and women to live a good life and to be moral and ethical  
 Doing good works and being religious

You have to clean yourself up and try hard to live a decent life by going to church and reading the bible and so on  
 And then God will save you

Well, my friends, that's not good news at all  
 You may have tried that, but it never works

*Jeffery Smith June 3, 2007*

It seems sometimes that the harder you try to be a Christian the worse you get  
Well listen to me, if you think the gospel has anything at all to do with something that you must do to make yourself right with God...

Or let me put it this way, if you think getting right with God is based in any degree at all upon personal effort to live a good life and to do good works and to straighten yourself out....  
Then no wonder the gospel has never to come to you as glad tidings of great joy

Paul is going to make it very clear in this epistle that the gospel is about a forgiveness and salvation that is given to men as a free gift  
A salvation that's about what God in his mercy has done for us, not what we do for him

After setting forth the desperate and universal and need of the gospel in ch.1:18 through ch.3:20  
Paul then begins to set forth the heart of the gospel itself in the next segment of the letter

And the heart of the gospel is justification by grace alone through faith alone  
Through faith alone in Jesus Christ and what he has done for sinners

The central text is in ch.3:24ff(turn)  
Read-vv.24-25a

Every phrase in these verses is glad tidings of great joy  
"Justified", is good news because it means that God declares sinners righteous in his sight  
Even though they're sinners, he declares them righteous

"Freely", is good news because it means that we can't earn this and we don't have to earn it  
We don't deserve it but this righteous standing with God is free, a completely free gift

"By His grace", is good news because it means that behind the wrath of God there is another mighty impulse and affection that is pulsating in his heart toward sinners  
His grace, his kindness and good will toward those who deserve just the opposite, which moved him to provide a way in which sinners can be saved from his own wrath

"Through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus", is good news because it points us to what that way is...  
To the basis upon which God can forgive and declare righteous and save sinners...

It's on the basis of the redemptive work of Jesus Christ upon the cross  
His obedience unto death by which He satisfied all the demands of God's law on behalf of those for whom he died

"Whom God set forth as propitiation by His blood", is good news because it tells us that the wrath of God that we deserve was absorbed and exhausted in the sufferings of Christ  
God in his love provided the propitiation of his own wrath in the bloody agony and death of His own Son

"Through faith" is good news because it tells us that the way this salvation become ours is by faith  
By faith alone

It is a gift of God's grace that we receive by the empty hand of faith  
Not of works lest any man should boast, but by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ  
This is the good news of the gospel

It is God's act of counting sinners to be righteous, even while they are yet sinners, by grace alone, through faith alone, on the basis of the work of Christ alone  
All you must do is believe this gospel and trust this Christ to save you and he will

And then Paul goes on later in the epistle to explain that receiving this grace by faith alone, God will also change you and He will enable you to walk in newness of life  
That, my dear friends, is glad tidings of great joy

That's the most wonderful news that has ever been heard  
May God grant that if not before, it will be good news to your heart this very night