

## Romans Ch 1:1-4

“God’s Good News”

Undoubtedly the apex of the apostle’s writings the Holy Spirit has used the book of Romans to spark more revivals and reformations in church history than any other single book in the bible. It was in September of 386 A.D. that a man by the name of Augustine (who would become universally recognized as one of the early church leaders and an outstanding theologian) sat weeping in the garden of his friend contemplating the wickedness of his life and his inability to truly make a decision for Jesus Christ and As he sat there he overheard a child singing a little ditty of the day, “Take up and read, take up and read” and as God would have it an open scroll of the book of Romans was there beside him, and he picked it up. The 1<sup>st</sup> passage that caught his eye read, “...*not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.*” Rom 13:13-14 Later on he wrote of that occasion, “No further would I read, nor did I need to. For instantly at the end of this sentence, it seemed as if a light of serenity infused into my heart and all the darkness of doubt vanished away.” - Augustine and He committed fully to Jesus Christ and the rest is as they say “history.”

Just over 1,000 yrs later it was this principle of justification by faith alone that gripped the heart of Martin Luther, he couldn’t get away from Rom 1:17, “For in it (that is the gospel) the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith.’” He said, “Night and day I pondered until . . . I grasped the truth that the righteousness of God is that righteousness whereby, through grace and sheer mercy, he justifies us by faith. Therefore I felt myself to be reborn and to have gone through open doors into paradise . . . This passage of Paul became to me a gateway into heaven.” Martin Luther and From there the great reformation was brought into fruition

A few centuries later a failed minister and missionary went by constraint to a small bible study where someone was reading aloud from Martin Luther’s commentary on Romans, later on he said of the experience, “...while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for my salvation, and an assurance was given me that he had taken *my* sins away, even *mine.*” – John Wesley and That night John Wesley was truly born again.

On and on we could go regarding the testimony of men whom God has used in a radical way who’ve been impacted and eternally changed by their reading and study of this book. Of course it’s our prayer that we would be impacted and eternally changed as we read through, and study this book, this letter that Paul wrote to the Romans. and We will be, because God’s in the business of transforming lives from glory to greater glory through His Word by the power of His Spirit. So may God give us ears to hear and the will to obey as we embark on our journey through the book of Romans together, both individually, but then also collectively as a body.

Written around 57-58 A.D. the book of Romans is uniquely and distinctly different from Paul's other epistles in that the book of Romans wasn't written to correct any problems in the church. With Paul's other epistles it was like, "There's a problem in Corinth I better address it by writing them a letter." Or "Thessalonica is teetering on the edge of stumbling because of a theological difficulty they've been confronted with I better write them a letter." But when Paul wrote to the believers in Rome, he'd never been there, had heard nothing but good things about them and was simply writing to be an encouragement to them and to give them a foretaste of what was to come with his arrival (God willing).

He'd wanted to come to Rome for a long time now, but circumstances prevented him from going. You recall from the book of Acts that his intentions were to make his way back to Jerusalem from Corinth (from where he wrote this letter to them) in order to give the church in Jerusalem the offering from the Gentile churches, and after that he wanted to make his way to Rome. But everywhere he went the Spirit was testifying that chains and tribulations awaited him. So it's possible that he wrote to them a bit of what they could expect to hear *from* him, just in case he never made it *to* them.

As for how the church in Rome was established we don't know, what I do know is that it wasn't the apostle Peter who established it because Paul made it very clear even later on in this letter that he purposed to *never* go where any of the other apostles had established a work lest he were to build on another man's foundation. It seems most likely from Acts ch 2 that on the day of Pentecost some who were in Jerusalem from Rome were saved that day and took the gospel home with them and that's how the church got started, but man Paul wanted to get there.

Because he understood something critical about the strategic placement of Rome, it was said in that day that, "all roads lead to Rome." But Paul understood that in order for all roads to lead *to* Rome that conversely it had to be true that all roads led *from* Rome. and Paul made it a habit to establish the gospel in high volume Metropolitan cities because he knew that there was all kinds of trafficking in and out of those cities (be it for trade, business, vacation, whatever). So people would come there, in the course of events get turned on to Jesus Christ and then from there when they went home, they would naturally carry the gospel with them and thus the work of evangelism could be multiplied greatly by the strategic placement of one solid group of believers in a major metropolitan area. and Paul's heart was to reach as many people as he possibly could with the gospel of Jesus Christ

As for the theme of Romans, there's many of them, "The righteousness of God" is the major theme, and the key vs is found in vs 17 of ch 1. The word "God" is used in this letter more so than any other in the NT employed over 150x meaning that it's used on the average of once every 46 words (or so). By way of comparison the word "Law" is used just over 70x, "Christ" around 65x "Sin" nearly 50x "Lord" just over 40x and "faith" is mentioned 40x, so though there are many key words and phrases by far the dominant focus of the book is upon God Himself.

Now some of the believers in Rome Paul knew, but there were many he'd never met. So in these 1<sup>st</sup> 17 vs Paul seeks to link himself to his Roman readers. and He does so in 3 ways, 1<sup>st</sup> of all by *presenting his credentials to them* as an apostle of Jesus Christ 2<sup>ndly</sup> by *expressing his concern for them* in that he continually prays for them and desires to be an encouragement to them, and 3<sup>rdly</sup> by *asserting his confidence towards them* in his readiness to preach the gospel to those who are in Rome. So Vs 1 begins

Vs1-4

As you know in that day they had a little different approach to writing letters than we do today in that today we open with who it's to and close with who it's from. But the person reading the letter knows who they are, they want to know who it's from, so in that day they began the letter with who it was who was writing to them.

So the letter opens here with who it's from, "Paul" and Paul tells us a few things about himself in this opening vs, if you're one who marks with your bible you might draw attention to them, #1 He's a bondservant of Jesus Christ #2 He's called to be an apostle and #3 He's been separated to the gospel of God. and The order is important, the very 1<sup>st</sup> thing Paul wants to have established about himself is that he's a servant of Jesus Christ 1<sup>st</sup> and he's an apostle 2<sup>nd</sup> In other words God owns the editing rights to his life, he's just a servant of Jesus Christ and God can make of him anything He wants at any *time* He wants, he's a servant 1<sup>st</sup> and the calling God has placed on his life is that of an apostle.

Now you're familiar with this word "Bondservant" it's the word "Doulos" that speaks of complete and utter devotion having given up all rights of my own out of love for my master to serve Him with out reserve or regard for my own life, all the days of my life.

The picture is seen there in the book of Ex ch 21 whereby a slave was to serve his master for 6 yrs and on the 7<sup>th</sup> he could go out free. But if he came freely of his own accord and said, "I love my master, my wife I met here, the kids I have here, I don't want to go free." Then the master was to take him to the judges, explain the situation and then he was to take that slave, place his ear to the door and pierce it through with an awl and then that slave was to serve his master for life. and That was the type of relationship that Paul considered himself in with regards to *his* master Jesus Christ "After all He's done *for* me, how good He's been *to* me, I don't want to go out from Him, I *love* Him and I willingly submit my life *to* Him forever." Walking out on Christ when times got tough, or saying goodbye to Christ when days turned difficult wasn't even an option, he was *submitted* to Christ and *committed* to Christ regardless of what that might cost him. Why? Because he understood how Christ loved him and gave Himself *for* him, and God help us to get a grip on that, to be able to wrap our understanding *around* that, that we might understand God's love *towards* us, how that He gave all that He could *for* us in the person of His Son. Believe me when I tell you that the more you get a grip on God's love *towards* you and all that He's done *for* you that that will translate into a more deeply *committed* and a more greatly *submitted* life to Jesus Christ "Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ"

“Called to be an apostle.” Once he submitted, once he committed he received his calling. You remember back in Acts ch 9 when Jesus Christ met Paul on the way to Damascus and that light shown around him, the 1<sup>st</sup> thing Paul did was submit (he fell on his face before the Lord) the next thing he did was to commit, he asked 2 questions, “Who are You Lord?” and When Jesus answered that he said, “What do you want me to do?” He committed himself to serve Jesus Christ and from that commitment Jesus issued his calling, in Acts 22 we find that the Lord said that he would be *sent* to the Gentiles. In Acts 26 we read for what purpose Jesus commissioned him to go *to* the Gentiles, “...*to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.*” Acts 26:18 This was his calling, his commission, he was charged *by* the Lord, and sent *of* the Lord to take the gospel to the Gentile nations. That’s what the word “apostle” literally means, “one sent out.” Now as for the biblical protocol we realize that apostles are no longer around in the church today. In order to be an apostle you had to have seen the risen Lord (1 Cor 9:1, 15:8), plus in Eph 2 we’re told that the *foundation* of the church was laid by the apostles and the prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, so we don’t have apostles today in the strict sense of the word. Perhaps missionaries would be as close as we get today, maybe a pastor teacher over a church might carry a few flavors of an apostolic type ministry. But in the strict sense of the biblical definition, we no longer have apostles today.

But all that to say, that was Paul’s calling, the question I have for you is what is *your* calling? 1<sup>st</sup> of all are you submitted to the Lord, are you truly committed to the Lord and if so what has He called you to do and are you doing it? Now we have a tendency to take this word “calling” and immediately apply it to the vocational aspects of ministry. and We often times err to think of any particular calling as a “high” calling over anything else. In other words it doesn’t matter what God’s called you to do, if you’re doing it that’s the high calling of God for your life. Being a pastor isn’t the high calling of God if He’s called you to be a construction worker, or a stay home mom, or an electrician or physician. If God’s called you to be a day laborer and you’re doing that as unto the Lord, than you’re operating and functioning with in the high calling of God for your life.

We get in trouble when we begin to set our sights on things God *hasn’t* called us to do because we think they’re perhaps more spiritual, or of some greater value to the Kingdom. and So we begin to step out beyond the confines of God’s calling upon our lives and we make a mess of things. 2 Things, be confident in your calling (make your calling and election sure) 2<sup>ndly</sup> be content in your calling. Just serve God where He has you now, and if He wants to do other things in your life He’s well able.

Paul was simply a servant of Jesus Christ, out of that he was called to be an apostle, and he was separated (that is set apart) to the gospel of God. Some think that by using that word “Separated” there he may be contrasting his former life as a Pharisee, because a Pharisee was literally a “separatist.” But as to where he *was* separated to the *Law* of God, out there in the legalistic wastelands of self-righteous hypocrisy, now he’s separated to the *gospel* of God. As an apostle he was a man with a message sent out as an ambassador of Jesus Christ and the message was the gospel, that is the good news of God. That’s what the word “Gospel” literally means, “Good news.”

John MacArthur writes, “Human beings are in the hold of a terrifying power that grips them at the very core of their being. Left unchecked, it pushes them to self-destruction in one form or another. That power is sin, which is always bad news.” and We could spend considerable time demonstrating and developing how that sin is bad news on every level and in every dimension. The self-centered nature of sin, the unrelenting guilt of a life lived *in* sin, the emptiness, meaninglessness, and hopelessness that accompanies the unrepentant life *of* sin. There’s nothing but bad news with reference to sin, but here’s the message; *God has good news*, and notice that, it’s the good news *of God*. Not of Paul, O Paul *proclaims* it, but it’s not the gospel of Paul, it’s the gospel, the good news of God. It’s not something that Paul has fabricated, but rather it’s a plan that God has facilitated from before the foundations of the earth. How that sin can be forgiven, selfishness can be overcome, guilt can be removed, anxiety alleviated, and life can be filled with hope (that is assured expectation) and eternal glory. and That plan is bound up in and unfolded to mankind through His Son Jesus Christ our Lord (vs3).

But before I get ahead of myself check out vs 2, Vs 1 tells us that God has a *plan* (the gospel) vs 2 says that this plan was *promised* before and *proclaimed* through His prophets. What’s that’s communicating to us is that the gospel was never plan B. It wasn’t a contingency plan that God had that just incase things went wrong He’d go ahead and initiate, or activate it. He promised it before and He made that promise known through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures, which is a reference to what we call the OT. We’ve spoken of this recently, the virgin birth (Gen 3 with regard to the Seed of the woman) and Isaiah ch 7, the sinless life yet unjust slaughter of the Messiah (Isaiah 53) His redemptive death and subsequent resurrection, it’s all there in the OT. The good news of God wasn’t a reluctant initiative after the fact of man’s fall, it was God’s promise before the world ever was. Now you start thinking about that too much and your brain will short circuit, but that’s what the bible teaches, Peter put it like this, “...*you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you*” 1 Peter 1:18-20

That God might underscore the fact that the plan was foreordained He gave us the good news (vs 3) concerning His Son Jesus Christ a couple thousand years before He was made flesh, and then over and over again down through the ages until that 400yr period of silence just before J.B. was brought on to the scene to prepare the way practically for the coming of Jesus Christ personally.

This is really the heart of the good news, the good news of God isn't concerning a certain teaching, or a particular system of morality but rather it centers on a person, the person of Jesus Christ

That's really the focus of these final couple vs we'll consider this morning. We've considered the plan, explored briefly the promise, vs 3 and 4 deal with the person, God's Son Jesus Christ our Lord, born of the seed of David according to the flesh (Vs 4 read). and In these vs Paul deals with both the eternality and the humanity of the God Man Jesus Christ 100% God 100% man, as the 2<sup>nd</sup> person of the Godhead, eternal in existence, but manifest, that is made flesh via the lineage/genealogically speaking through the seed of David.

That is God promised David that He would bring the Messiah into the world through his lineage. You recall that God told David that He would set up his house and establish his throne forever, which was a direct reference to the eternal reign of the Messiah. and God told David I'm going to bring the Messiah through your line, so in order for Jesus to qualify as the Messiah, one thing He needs to be is a descendant of David and as you look in both Matthew and Luke, they both trace the genealogy of Jesus (humanly speaking) back to David through both Mary and Joseph. Now they took different trails down through the ages but both lead ultimately back to David, so as David's descendant He meets *that* qualification, so the fact that He was David's Son was easy enough to prove.

But what was it that validated, and demonstrated His claim to be God's Son? People occasionally say that Jesus never claimed Deity, all they do is display their own ignorance of the scripture, He claimed it all the time. He said, "*Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM.*" John 8:58 "Ego Eimi" The ever present eternal God, the name employed by God at the burning bush passage, "I Am that I Am." There's that passage in John 10 where Jesus said, "I and My Father are one." and The Jews picked up rocks to stone Him, He said, "I've done all kinds of good works in your midst from My Father, for which one do you stone Me?" "*The Jews answered Him, saying, 'For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy, and because You, being a Man, make Yourself God.'*" John 10:33 They knew exactly what He was saying, that He was the eternal God right there in the flesh, but here's the deal, He didn't make Himself God, He is God, He didn't just claim something, make it up and try to pull the wool over everyone's eyes.

“How do you know that? What validates that claim, what demonstrates that claim?” 2 Words, “The resurrection” He was declared to be (that is demonstrated to be) the sinless Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead. Jesus said, *“Destroy this temple, and in three days I (meaning I Myself) will raise it up.”* John 2:19 The evidence of His humanity demonstrated in His Human birth, the evidence of His deity displayed in the resurrection, being as it were the 1<sup>st</sup> born from the dead, to rise in His resurrection body having tasted death never to never die again.

That’s the good news of God, that Jesus, the eternally existent, ever present 2<sup>nd</sup> person of the Godhead was made flesh, fully God, fully Man. He lived a sinless life and died a sinner’s death, He laid down His life on the altar of the cross for you and for me. It wasn’t God’s contingency plan, He loves you and had a plan to give Himself for you before the world ever was. He knows our tendencies, He knew we would fail, He knows you’re going to fail, that’s why out of His love, and for His glory, He did for us what we could never do for ourselves. and He shed His blood for the remission of our sin, the bible says the wages of sin is death, He paid that penalty on our behalf, and just as by one man (that is Adam) sin entered the world, even so By One Man (that is Jesus) that sin has been atoned for.

Later on we’ll read in Romans how that as through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous. That is as many as will call upon His name for, whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. and That’s what we want to focus on as we prepare our hearts for communion, the free gift that’s come to all men, the forgiveness of sin through the obedience of Jesus Christ to the point of death, even the death of the cross.

Prayer Points: Lord we thank You for Your willingness to do for us, that which we could never do for ourselves, we could never hope to lead a righteous life apart from You, or somehow make up for, or pay the penalty of our sin. Yet You in Your grace and Your love towards us, have given Yourself for us. Help us to get a grip on your great Love, that we might in turn serve you with all that we are, that we might know what it means to be *Your* bondservant, committed to You, submitted to You, obedient to Your call upon our lives.

If you’re here and you’ve never submitted your life to Christ, you’ve never committed your life to Christ, perhaps God is dealing with you now that you might surrender to Him, opening your heart to Him, that He might forgive your sin, alleviate your guilt, and make you whole. I’m not promising you a life with out tough times, to the contrary sometimes the roads get real rough, what I’m promising you is forgiveness of sin, and everlasting life. A newness of life (If any man...new creation)