

ROMANS 1:1-15

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Rom. 1:1 Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God

Comments on Romans 1:1-15

Paul-Like his other letters, this one begins with his name, but it is not in his own name that he comes. He comes on behalf of the Lord and by His commission – the servant of Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ- In the coupling of these two names there is something that today we might skip over and take for granted because the passing of time has made it common place. For us, the name Christ is only a proper name for the familiar figure of Jesus Christ. The two names are fused into one and considered one name.

For Paul and his age the Christ concept, the Messiah concept, had a vital meaning, a reality independent of Jesus and prior to him.

When Paul couples Christ with Jesus he means something unprecedented – that the Messiah for whom Israel had waited for centuries had now come and the Messianic age was with him.

Thus, in Paul's day God's greatest miracle had occurred, and Paul had been appointed to proclaim this fact.

Servant - slave -

Christ is Lord and Paul is his bond servant. For many the passing centuries have caused the expression "Christ is Lord" and "man is his bond servant" to lose their meaning. It was different with Paul. To Paul the terms expressed life's greatest and most revolutionary reality. What it means for Paul to be a bond servant is implicit in the fact that Christ is Lord. The two terms are correlative.

What the term means for Paul can be seen in Phil. 2:9ff -- God has exalted him and given him a name that is above every name. God has given him the name that is reserved for God himself, the name Lord.

A relationship marked at every turn by obligation and dependence. May seem extreme, but only to those who have never known forgiveness and redemption. Slave could be more than a menial; trusted with the offices of high responsibility. Bound to be the slave of something. 6:16. A false freedom is the most absolute kind of servitude.

Called to be an apostle - lit., a called apostle. Not what he was called to be, but what he was. Paul had not taken this task upon himself; God had called him for this purpose

Separated - (set apart) he did not casually select his task. The word is from the same root word as Pharisee. Even before his becoming a Christian he had been “set apart.” As a Pharisee he had set himself apart for the law. But now God had set him apart for something entirely different.

Unto the Gospel of God - the source of the gospel.

2 which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures,

v. 2 – the very scriptures on which the Jews relied promised the gospel which he preached. The gospel is the great new reality that God has brought to us, and yet this new reality is not unrelated to what has gone before. It does not come without preparation. Already through the prophets God had promised such a gospel. The gospel comes as the fulfillment of promises given earlier. What had once been a promise has now become reality. 1 Cor. 15:3ff; Acts 13:32ff.

3 the gospel concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh

V. 3 -- concerning his son Jesus Christ -- The gospel has a single center around which all revolves. From beginning to end it treats of the Son of God. Paul can simply characterize the content of the gospel of God: it is the gospel about the Son of God.

made of the seed of David according to the flesh - the virgin birth.

As man, sharing our humanity, He is descended from David – in harmony with the Old Testament promise. But Christ does not only belong to our humanity. According to the Spirit of Holiness He was designated the Son of God in power. That was certified to Him and to us by His resurrection from the dead.

To Paul, the resurrection of Christ from the dead is God’s mightiest act. It is by the resurrection that the new age dawned. Eph. 1:19-21. For Paul, Christ’s resurrection is the beginning of the resurrection of the dead. 1 Cor. 15:20.

4 and designated Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord,

v. 4 - his spirit: Contrast to the flesh. Acts 26:15-18. Through His resurrection He entered into sovereign power in the new eon, the resurrection eon which itself began with his resurrection.

There is no support here for the adoptionist theory held by

some, including William Barclay.

Paul sums up the gospel in the name, Jesus Christ our Lord. The whole gospel is encompassed in the fact that Jesus is the Christ, the promised Messiah, and that God designated Him Son of God in power by the resurrection and gave Him the name that is above every name.

5 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,

v.5 - Paul has addressed himself to the Romans as a servant, a called apostle, one set apart to the gospel, he has characterized the gospel by pointing to the Son of God who by his resurrection was exalted as Lord. When he now returns to his apostleship, the fullness and breadth of that office can be seen in the light of the message he has to proclaim. It was from THE LORD that Paul received grace and apostleship.

This is probably a *hendiadys* (the “one by means of two” figure of speech; that is, one concept expressed by two nouns connected by and), and thus could be translated the gift (or grace) of apostleship.

1. In the present context it is hard to see why Paul would have to emphasize that he is a man saved by grace.
2. In Rom. 15:15-16 the grace mentioned is Paul’s ministry, his apostolic office. Cf. Rom. 12:6.

The purpose for which Paul was appointed was to bring about obedience of faith. Such obedience is based on faith and springs from faith. In fact, so closely are faith and obedience connected that they may be compared to inseparable identical twins. When you see the one you see the other. A person cannot have genuine faith without having obedience, and vice versa.

A striking illustration of this fact is offered by Paul in two synonymous passages, one concerning faith and one concerning obedience: Rom. 1:8; 16:19.

6 including yourselves who are called to belong to Jesus Christ; 7 To all God's beloved in Rome, who are called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

v.6 - called to belong to Jesus Christ. see. v. 7.

v.7 – God’s beloved – It is not hard to find the reason why Paul applies this name. The entire message of Romans is that through Jesus Christ, God has set us free from the powers of the old age and given us the righteousness of God and a new life in the new age, and that the love of God is both the sole cause and ultimate ground thereof. It was love that impelled God to give His Son for our sake (8:32). That love is demonstrated in that the Son was given while we were yet enemies (5:8). By the intervention of

God's love we have been removed from wrath, sin, the law, and death. We have been removed from all those powers that ruled in the old age, and translated to the new. Col. 1:13. To belong to God's beloved (lit., the Son of His love), is to be God's beloved. It is also to love God. 1 John 4:19.

called to be saints - not perfect. Responded to call and going in the right direction.

Paul places emphasis on the call. Calling and believing are joined in the word. Rom. 10:11-15; Acts 22:16; 1 Thess. 2:14.

For Paul, "the called" is a technical name for Christians. What the term signifies is seen in 2 Tim. 1:9f.

Called to belong to Christ and to be saints. When we use the word our thoughts turn in a moralistic direction. We think of an ethical quality, perhaps even approaching sinlessness. "I'm no saint, but . . ." Paul knows no saints in the Roman Catholic sense of that term. He does not use the term to apply only to those who have advanced far in sanctification. All Christians, without exception, are saints, but it is not by virtue of their own efforts or their ethical quality. They are saints only by virtue of God's call. Thereby they have been taken out of the world and set apart as God's own.

Paul knew that in the old dispensation there were certain places, objects, and people that had been "set apart" and "consecrated" for the service of God (*e.g.*, the holy place (1 Kings 8:10), the holy of holies (Exod. 19:6), the tithe of the land (Lev. 27:30), the priests (Lev. 21:6-7), the Israelites as a whole, viewed in distinction from the other nations (Exod. 19:6; Lev. 20:26; Deut. 7:6; Dan. 7:22)).

This idea is applied to Christians in the new dispensation. 1 Pet. 2:9. A saint, then, is one whose sins have been blotted out on the basis of Christ's substitutionary atonement, and who, consequently, strives to live to God's glory. He is one who has been set apart and consecrated for service.

Grace and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ – Paul brings his salutation to a close with the traditional greeting. The full significance of these words may best be grasped by viewing them in the light of Jesus' own form of the salutation of peace – it is a gift that He imparts to His disciples. John 14:27. When He sent them forth, He instructed them to begin their preaching by pronouncing peace upon whatever house they entered. Paul proceeds in this fashion.

While we always assume, and perhaps with good reason,

that peace was the common Jewish greeting and grace was the common Gentile greeting, we should not forget that grace and peace were already joined together in the Aaronic benediction. Numb. 6:25f. Grace and peace constitute a unity, giving inclusive expression to salvation in its fullness.

Grace brings peace. Peace is both a state, that of reconciliation with God, and a condition, the inner conviction that consequently all is well. It is not the reflection of an unclouded sky in the tranquil waters of a picturesque lake, but rather the cleft of the rock in which the Lord hides his children when the storm is raging.

This grace and this peace have their origin in God *our* Father and have been merited for us by Christ, our Lord and Savior.

This benediction is one of the evidences that Paul did in fact affirm the deity of Christ. Only for that reason could Paul possibly have placed Christ beside Father without qualification. This finds support in the fact that Christ, even in the context of the Father, has the right to the name "Lord." In that name lies the most unequivocal confession of Christ's divine majesty.

8 First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed in all the world.

v. 8 – We come to the second and less important half of the introduction here (vv. 8-15). Paul begins with thanksgiving for the Roman church because its faith is proclaimed in all the world.

He may be holding up the church as an example, but it may be no more than the fact that the gospel had made its way to Rome and had been received with faith on their part. Note that for Paul God was not a philosophical abstraction but a real friend. God was the object of Paul's trust and love, the One to whom he owed everything (Acts 27:23 – the God whose I am whom also I serve).

9 For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I mention you always in my prayers,

v.9 – He does not want them to think that what he is saying is simply conventional form – "Come and see me sometime." He calls God as his witness. God knows that for a long time the Roman church has been in Paul's thoughts and prayers.

He describes God as the one whom he serves. (serve - worship. Rom. 12:1.) Some interpreters insert the word "preaching" in this context, see v. 15. While this may well have been the primary service that Paul rendered, even that which he was called to do, the expression is much broader. Paul served when he prayed, when he confronted individuals with the gospel, when he

comforted an individual, and, above all, when he dedicated his entire life and all his talents to God.

Note “the gospel of His Son” – it is by the Son’s incarnation, life, death, resurrection, ascension, coronation, intercession, and pouring out of the Spirit that mankind may obtain the promised blessings.

He describes the extent of his service -- with my spirit - the whole man is at God's disposition.

He describes a particular service -- make mention of you always in my prayers. To pray for a man is the best possible preparation for doing him any service which love demands.

10 asking that somehow by God's will I may now at last succeed in coming to you.

v.10 - Hopes and plans are always within the framework of God's purpose for him. *Deo volente* was not an empty phrase to Paul. The constant and voluntary act of subjecting himself to God’s sovereign intention for his life and labors was that which sustained him in all of his trials.

11 For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you,

v.11 - What kind of spiritual gift?

1. Teaching?
2. Miraculous?
3. Rom. 12:6-8.

12 that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine.

v. 11b-12 – to strengthen you and to be strengthened by you. No one is so devoid of gifts that he cannot impart something to our benefit. If we do not benefit by gifts that others offer, the fault usually lies in us, our envy, our pride, and thus we impoverish ourselves. Paul did not disdain to seek confirmation from inexperienced beginners. Hear what he says, too, for there is no one so void of gifts in the church who is unable to contribute something to our benefit. Ill will and pride, however, prevent our deriving such fruit from one another.

13 I want you to know, brethren, that I have often intended to come to you (but thus far have been prevented), in order that I may reap some harvest among you as well as among the rest of the Gentiles.

v. 13 - Acts 16:6-8. He had been long willing, but it had not been God’s will, something had always prevented his going. God had given him other tasks. He gives evidence of his intention in Acts 19:21. Some suggest that he emphasizes his desire to have visited Rome because Judaizing teachers were saying that he was afraid to go to Rome. They point to 1:16 – I am not ashamed. We have no certain knowledge of that. What we do know is that

Paul is preparing them for his coming by this letter, and that he makes clear to them that his failure to come earlier was not the result of indifference.

Note the use of the word “brethren.” Paul uses it often, in fact, over 100 times. While there is a sense in which all men are brothers, Paul uses it here to describe those who are in Christ and who thereby belong to the family of God.

14 I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish: 15 so I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.

v.14 – The fundamental reason is his consciousness of an inescapable duty. Only when he had pointed that out did his introduction come to an end.

What was the basis of his obligation? What had they done for Paul? The background of what he says about this duty is his recognition of Jesus Christ as Lord and of himself as His bond servant. Jesus Christ, the gospel, and his own apostolic office all lay this duty upon him.