

Lesson 11 at StudyRomans.org

The Handout for Lesson 11

The Handout for Lesson 11 shows the earliest known copy that we have of Paul's salutation in the first seven verses of Romans.

On the right side of the Handout, you can see a photo of the actual papyrus page, and on the left side you can see both the Greek letters and the English translation.

I have circled the word "power" in all three locations where it occurs. And you can see from the Greek letters — starting with delta — that the English word "power" comes from the Greek word "dynamis," from which we get our word *dynamite*. We will see this same word again when we get to verse 16.

The origin of this earliest known manuscript of the first seven verses of Romans is interesting — it seems to have been a discarded homework assignment!

The Greek letters are rather sloppy and are said to display "the handwriting of a student learning to write Greek." That student also seems to have left out a bit of the original text! As you can see from the English translation, about half of verse 6 is missing in the Greek version. Perhaps the student was writing this down from memory, which could explain the missing phrase and might also explain why "Jesus Christ" in verse 7 was reversed.

If you look at the middle of the manuscript page, you will see two lines that are clearly written in a different handwriting. Those two lines

seem to have been a pen test by which someone else scribbled some gibberish to get the ink flowing in his pen!

And then, at some point after the homework assignment and after the pen test, this page was discarded, which is how it ended up in the Egyptian trash dump where it was found, along with thousands of personal letters, shopping lists, and business accounts.

Romans 1:6

Romans 1:6 — including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ,

Last week we looked at verse 5, and we looked at whether the phrase “all the nations” includes both the Jews and the Gentiles, or instead includes only the Gentiles.

Last week, I said that, in my opinion, the phrase should be viewed geographically rather than demographically. That is, Paul is telling us where he wanted to preach, rather than to whom he wanted to preach. In short, Paul wanted to preach everywhere.

As for why I think that, my answer is verse 6. I think verse 6 makes much more sense when we view verse 5 geographically. Why? Because of the phrase at the beginning of verse 6 — “including you.”

In verses 5 and 6, Paul says that what he was doing was “for the sake of his name among all the nations, **including you** who are called to belong to Jesus Christ.” What that means is that, if we limit verse 5, then we have to apply that same limit to verse 6. For example, if we say that verse 5 is talking only about the Gentiles, then verse 6 must

also be talking only about the Gentiles because of that word “including.” In mathematical terms, verse 6 is a subset of verse 5.

But that is where we have a problem. Why would Paul refer here with this word “you” only to the Gentiles in Rome? And how could we ever square that view with the parts of this letter that clearly include the Jews, such as Romans 7:1 — “I am speaking to those who know the law”?

That is a problem, but that problem goes away if we view verse 5 geographically. In that case, all that Paul is saying here is that he was working as an apostle for the sake of Jesus’ name to preach the gospel among all areas of the world, **including the city of Rome**.

And doesn’t that make sense? We know that there was great tension in Rome between Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians. How would it have helped matters for Paul to send a letter to only the Gentiles? Wouldn’t that have made the situation worse rather than better? And, of course, as we have said, once we read the letter we see that it has, in fact, been sent to both Jew and Gentile — which is another reason to view verses 5 and 6 geographically.

And, yes, Paul did, over time, become increasingly focused on the Gentiles, but Paul’s mission from Jesus was to teach *both* Jew and Gentile.

Acts 9:15 — But the Lord said to him, “Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings **and the children of Israel**.”

So, I think the word “you” in verse 5 includes both Jews and Gentiles living in Rome. But we still have a question: is that all of the Jews

and Gentiles living in Rome, or is that only the Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians living in Rome?

I think we can find some help with that question back in verse 5. Paul said there that his goal was “to bring about” the obedience of faith in all nations. That language suggests that this group in verse 5 is all of Rome, and especially those in Rome who had **not** yet obeyed the gospel. Paul wanted to teach them about the gospel “to **bring about** the obedience of faith.”

When we looked at verse 1, we looked at the word “called” and how that word is used in the Bible. And what we saw is that the word “called” is sometimes used broadly and sometimes used narrowly. When used broadly, the word “called” does not tell us the answer to the call (as in, everyone is called to repent). But when used narrowly, the word “called” does tell us the answer to the call (as in, Paul was called to be an apostle).

I think the word “called” here in verse 6 is being used broadly to describe the gospel call, which is for all people in all the world. God calls everyone to obey the gospel, although we know that many will reject that call.

In short, I think verses 5 and 6 can be paraphrased this way: “I became an apostle to preach the gospel to all people everywhere, including to all people in Rome.” In fact, Paul will tell us that same thing later in verse 15: “So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.” And, again, that is everybody in Rome. They all needed to hear the gospel. I think that is the best way to understand verses 5 and 6.

But we must not skip over that last phrase in verse 6: “called to belong to Jesus Christ.”

That phrase near the end of Paul’s salutation brings us all the way back to beginning of his salutation: “Paul, a **servant** of Christ Jesus.” Paul belonged to Jesus, and, of course, so must we. That is what it means to be a disciple of Christ — we belong to Christ.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 (ESV) — Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? **You are not your own**, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

We hear the opposite of that verse so much today. “It’s my body to do with as I please.” The pro-abortion crowd has been shouting that slogan for years, and now we also hear it from the transgender crowd. But I think the attitude is much more widespread than just that, and especially in a nation such as our own that is built on individual liberties and inalienable rights.

But that common attitude in the world must never be our attitude in the church. If I am a Christian, then it is **not** my body to do with as I please. “You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.”

If I am a Christian, then I do **not** belong to myself. I belong to Christ. I am a slave of Christ, and my body is not mine to do with as I please, but is his to do with as he pleases.

And verse 6 tells us that the entire world is called to belong to Christ. God wants everyone to obey the gospel and be saved. And when we

obey the gospel of Christ, we give up whatever rights we have to our own body. Why? Because “you are not your own, for you were bought with a price.” Or, as Paul tells us here, we were “called to belong to Jesus Christ.”

Romans 1:7

Romans 1:7 — To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

If we have been looking for the phrase “Dear Romans” in Paul’s salutation, I think we have finally found it here in verse 7.

So far in this opening of the letter, Paul has been telling the Romans about himself and about his mission. He is Paul, a slave of Christ and an apostle of Christ, and his mission is to proclaim the gospel of Christ to all nations, including Rome.

But that is just the return address! And that return address isn’t of much help to the post office! Whoever is delivering Paul’s letter (possibly Phoebe, as we will see later), that person needs to know the address of the letter rather than the return address. And I think that address is what we find here in verse 7. This letter is addressed to the Christians in Rome, who (again, as we will see later) were apparently worshipping in congregations scattered all about the city.

But does verse 7 really say that? “To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints.” Why isn’t that everyone? Aren’t we **all** loved by God? Aren’t we **all** called by God to be saints?

Yes, we are. But only some of us answer that call. Some of us become saints (a word we will look at more closely in a moment). In short, we have the same question about the word “called” here in verse 7 that we had about that same word back in verse 1 and in verse 6.

In verse 1, we concluded that the word “called” was being used narrowly to mean that Paul was not just called to be an apostle, but that Paul actually was an apostle. Paul had answered that call.

In verse 6, we concluded that the word “called” was being used broadly to mean that Paul’s mission was to take the gospel to all nations, including those in Rome. All people everywhere are called to obey the gospel and to belong to Christ.

And here in verse 7? Is “called” being used narrowly as in verse 1, or is “called” being used broadly as in verse 6?

I think “called” is being used narrowly here in verse 7. I think these people in verse 7 were not just called to be saints; I think they are saints. These people in verse 7 had answered the gospel call.

And doesn’t that make sense with verse 6? If verse 6 and verse 7 are both broad or if they are both narrow, then why say it twice? I think the better view is that verse 6 is broad (the gospel call is for all), but that verse 7 is narrow (this letter is to those who have answered that call by obeying the gospel).

And, yes, we are called through the proclamation of the gospel. That is how God’s call works — we hear it. Paul will tell us that in this letter.

Romans 10:17 — So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

And Paul also tells us that in another letter.

2 Thessalonians 2:14 — To this **he called you through our gospel**, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But are Christians the only people God loves? No, of course not. And this verse does not teach otherwise even if we view the word “called” narrowly, as I think we should. The word “called” can be viewed narrowly or broadly, and the same is true of the word “loved.”

We know the Bible teaches us that God loves the whole world.

John 3:16 — For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

Romans 5:8 — But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

But I think the Bible also teaches us that God has a special love for those of us who have obeyed the gospel of Christ and who are faithfully following the commands of Christ. God has a special love for those of us in the body of Christ who have become the children of God.

John 14:21 — Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. **And he who loves me will be loved by my Father**, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.

John 15:10 — **If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love**, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love.

1 John 3:1 — **See what kind of love the Father has given to us**, that we should be called children of God; and so we are.

Jude 21 — **Keep yourselves in the love of God**, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life.

I think this special love that God has for his children is the love we see here in verse 7 — it is God's love for those who have answered his call and who have become his children.

Let's look next at the word "saints" in verse 7.

If you ask the man on the street to define the word "saint," you will almost certainly not get the right answer. Why not? Because, as they have done with so many things, the Catholics have redefined that word to mean something different from what it means in the Bible — and the Catholics' incorrect definition has become the world's definition.

And what is that incorrect definition? Let's open a dictionary:

Saint: "A person formally recognized or canonized by the Church after death, who may be the object of veneration and prayers for intercession."

And we don't have to look very far to find an example of that false view. In fact, if we all convened outside in our parking lot and looked eastward, we might be able to see the new Saint Faustina Catholic

Church building that is being built nearby. And who was Saint Faustina? She was a Polish nun canonized by Pope John Paul II in 2000. The Catholics claim that she had private revelations from Jesus, which she then recorded in her diary.

I did not know Faustina, but I can tell you this: **if Saint Faustina did not obey the gospel of Christ, then Saint Faustina was no saint!**

What the Bible teaches is that **all** Christians are saints and that **only** Christians are saints. If I am a saint, then I am a Christian. And if I am a Christian, then I am a saint.

I become a saint, not when some man-made religious group makes me so, but when God makes me so. And God makes me so when I arise from the watery grave of baptism cleansed from my sins to walk in newness of life.

How do we know that? We know that when we open our Bible. Paul, for example, will tell us all about it in Romans 6. We know it when we open our Bible, but we also know it when we open our dictionary.

The English word “saint” is a translation of the Greek word “*hagios*,” which means holy, set apart, sanctified, and consecrated. Its fundamental idea is separation, consecration, devotion to the service of God, sharing in God’s purity, and abstaining from the defilements in the world.

Those descriptions, of course, apply to all Christians. All of us who have obeyed the gospel of Christ and who are remaining faithful to Christ are holy, set apart, sanctified, and consecrated. If we are not, then we are no longer a part of Christ.

Ephesians 5:3,5 — But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, **as is proper among saints.** ... For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), **has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.**

And that is how the word “saint” is used in the Bible. When Paul wrote a letter to the Christians in a certain city, Paul would address his letter to the **saints** in that city. We see that right here in verse 7, but we also see it in other letters of Paul.

- **1 Corinthians 1:2** — “To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be **saints.**”
- **2 Corinthians 1:1** — “To the church of God that is at Corinth, with all the **saints** who are in the whole of Achaia.”
- **Ephesians 1:1** — “To the **saints** who are in Ephesus, and are faithful in Christ Jesus.”
- **Philippians 1:1** — “To all the **saints** in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi.”
- **Colossians 1:2** — “To the **saints** and faithful brothers in Christ at Colossae.”

And we can also see that by looking at a closely related word: “sanctified,” which translates the Greek word “hagiazō,” meaning to make holy, to purify, or to consecrate. The Greek root word for “saint” and “sanctify” is the same.

And **who** are the sanctified? The Bible teaches us that all Christians are sanctified.

1 Corinthians 6:11 — And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were **sanctified**, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

Ephesians 5:25-26 — Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might **sanctify** her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word.

And **when** did that happen? Didn't Paul just answer that question?

- **1 Corinthians 6:11** — “But you were **washed**, you were **sanctified**”
- **Ephesians 5:25-26** — “that he might **sanctify** her, having cleansed her by the **washing** of water with the word”

We are sanctified by God at our baptism, when our sins are washed away and we are cleansed. And that is true of all who obey the gospel of Christ. We are all saints!

And with that, Paul's salutation comes to an end! The body of this letter begins with the next verse. And what will Paul say first? Let's see.

Romans 1:8

Romans 1:8 — First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed in all the world.

The first thing Paul does is thank God! Paul thanks God for the church in Rome. I think that is how we must view that phrase “all of you” in verse 8 — all of the Christians in Rome. This word “all” in verse 8 must be the same group described in verse 7: “all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints.”

And what that means is that the word “you” should be added to our growing list of words with both a broad and a narrow meaning! In verse 6, the word “you” referred to those in Rome, but here in verse 8 the same word “you” refers to those in the church in Rome. As with all pronouns, we need to pay close attention to the context. And the context here is that Paul thanked God for the church in Rome.

Before we look at why Paul was thankful for the church in Rome, let’s first look at why Paul started his letter this way.

If Jesus had not appeared to Saul in Acts 9, where would Saul have been at the time this letter was written? What would Saul have been doing? We know that Saul was single-minded, and so I see no reason to think that Saul would not have still been persecuting the church. Saul would have still been completely opposed to God, as Saul was when he met Jesus in Acts 9.

And you know what? I think Paul knew that. I know that Paul knew that. No one on earth knew Saul better than Paul did!

Paul knew that, absent Acts 9, he would still have been lost and hopeless. And you know what? Paul never quit thanking God for that fact. Paul knew that he had been snatched out of the fire. Paul knew that he had been saved by the grace of God. Paul knew that his sins — as terrible as they were — had all been washed away at his baptism. And Paul was thankful. Paul was always thankful.

Paul uses some form of the word “thanks” nearly 50 times in his epistles. We see that word here in verse 8, and we see it in many other places as well:

- **Romans 6:17** — But **thanks** be to God...
- **Romans 7:25** — **Thanks** be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!
- **1 Corinthians 1:4** — I give **thanks** to my God always for you...
- **1 Corinthians 15:57** — But **thanks** be to God...
- **2 Corinthians 2:14** — But **thanks** be to God...
- **2 Corinthians 8:16** — But **thanks** be to God...
- **2 Corinthians 9:15** — **Thanks** be to God for his inexpressible gift!
- **Ephesians 1:16** — I do not cease to give **thanks** for you...
- **Ephesians 5:20** — Giving **thanks** always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

- **Colossians 3:17** — And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving **thanks** to God the Father through him.
- **1 Thessalonians 5:18** — Give **thanks** in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

And we could have read many more examples.

And so why did Paul begin this letter by thanking God? I think it was because, first and foremost, Paul was a thankful person.

And I suspect that was one of the many things that changed in Paul after his encounter with Christ. I suspect that, as with most of the other Pharisees, thankfulness was not high on Paul's list prior to Acts 9. The Pharisees were smug and self-righteous; they thought God owed them, not the other way around. They thought God should be thankful for them!

Was that Saul? Was Saul like that? We don't know for sure, but we know most of the Pharisees were like that. And we know that Paul, after Acts 9, was nothing like that. Paul was saved by grace, and Paul never stopped thanking God.

And, yes, here comes the question for me. Is that me? Am I a thankful person? When I come to God in prayer, does God hear my thanksgiving — or does God hear my griping? When I look up, do I see the throne of Almighty God — or do I see just a big complaint box?

I, like Paul, have been saved by the grace of God. I, like Paul, have been snatched from the fire. I am like Paul in that way. But am I also like Paul in how I respond to that? Am I as thankful as Paul?

And we must not skip over that phrase “through Jesus Christ” in verse 8. Paul thanked God “through Jesus Christ.” Paul often began his letters by thanking God, but only here in Romans does Paul say it this way: “I thank my God **through Jesus Christ.**”

Why? There may be a deep theological reason as some commentaries suggest — such as, for example, that it was through Jesus the mediator or through Jesus the High Priest that these thanks were offered. And, of course, that is all correct, but it doesn’t explain why this phrase appears only in the opening of Romans and not in the openings of Paul’s other letters.

I think there may be a simpler answer to why this phrase is used this way only here in the opening of his letter to Romans — and it ties us back to all that Paul said in his salutation.

- Paul is a servant of Christ rather than a servant of sin — why? Because Jesus appeared to Paul and told him what he needed to do to be saved.
- Paul is an apostle of Christ rather than an enemy of Christ — why? Because Jesus appeared to Paul and told him what he needed to do to be saved.

And so Paul thanked God **through Jesus Christ.** Why? Because everything Paul was thankful for had come **through Jesus Christ.**

Prior to Acts 9, Paul had tried to be pleasing to God **apart from Jesus Christ** — and Paul now knew that was impossible. All of Paul’s thankfulness was **through Jesus Christ**, and that includes Paul’s thankfulness for the church in Rome.

But why? Why was Paul so thankful for the church in Rome when he had not established the church in Rome and he had not ever been to Rome? Yes, Paul knew some of the Christians in Rome, but he had never met most of them. Why was Paul so thankful for them?

Verse 8 answers that question: “First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, **because your faith is proclaimed in all the world.**”

It seems that the church in Rome had a reputation! They had a reputation for faithfulness.

Before we look at that reputation, let’s pause to notice something else. The first thing Paul did in this letter is thank God, but the second thing Paul did was that he gave the Christians in Rome a big compliment! And that is always a good way to get someone’s attention.

Paul will have some very tough things to say in this letter about some things that were wrong in Rome. Paul had heard some other reports about Rome that were not as good as this report in verse 8, but that is not how Paul starts off his letter. Paul starts off by telling the church in Rome what they were doing right!

And what was this thing they were doing right? It is that their faith was being proclaimed in all the world! But why? What was it about their faith that was being proclaimed everywhere?

Was it the **strength** of their faith? Maybe, but Paul does not say that here. He does not say that their *strong* faith is being proclaimed in all the world, but instead Paul just says that their faith is being proclaimed in all the world.

Was their faith unusually strong? Again, maybe, but just a few verses later in verse 11 Paul will say that he longs to come and strengthen them. And in Romans 14:1, we will learn that at least some of the Christians in Rome were weak in faith.

So were people all over the world talking about the strong faith in Rome? Again, maybe, but verse 8 doesn't say that. But if the strength of their faith wasn't the unusual thing that was being proclaimed all over the world, then what was? I think it may have been, not the strength of their faith, but the fact of their faith.

Quick — everyone think of the city in the United States where the church is the strongest? The city where, if you chose a name at random from the phone book, you would have the best chance of choosing a Christian. The city where, if you just started driving around, you would have the best chance of driving by a church building.

What city did you choose? Nashville? Montgomery? Searcy?

Did anyone choose New York? I doubt it! I don't think New York has a reputation for being a great city of faith. I don't think New York has a reputation for being a place where the Lord's church is particularly strong.

But what if it did? What if there was a strong congregation on every corner of New York City? What if many New Yorkers were hearing the gospel and obeying the gospel, and that congregations were growing all over that city? Do you think that would make the news? Do you think those of us in Texas and elsewhere would be talking about it? Do you think their reputation would have spread far and wide? I think so.

But why? Because New York is New York. Because, right or wrong, when most people think of a fertile field for the gospel, most people do not think of New York. Yes, they need it just like everyone else, but do they know that they need it? Is there, in fact, anything that they think they need? Anything they think they need to learn? And, more to the point, anything they need to learn from us?

Right or wrong, I think most of us picture New York City as hard, impenetrable soil. And I suspect that is exactly how many in the church of Paul's day saw the city of Rome. Perhaps the most remarkable thing about faith in Rome was that there was faith in Rome.

Rome was the ultra-sophisticated capital of the known world — what did Rome need that Rome did not already have? What could Rome learn from someone who had been executed by the Roman state as a criminal in some far-flung province? After all, the king lived just down the street in their own city — why did Rome need another king? And, unlike many other cities, no apostle had ever set foot in Rome. No one had shown up in Rome to establish any congregations.

In short, who would expect there to be any faith in Rome? And yet there was faith in Rome. There were many Christians in Rome, both Jew and Gentile. And they were worshipping and serving God — even without apostles, even without the spiritual gifts that came from the apostles, and even without the word of God that came from the apostles.

And that may be why the faith in Rome was being proclaimed everywhere! Not that it was strong — but that it existed.

And what is faith? I don't see any reason at this point to change our earlier proposed definition: faith is reliance upon and trust in God. That is exactly what we see here in Rome.

The church in Rome was a very small group in a very large city; the church in Rome consisted mainly of poor people and slaves; the church in Rome had not ever been visited by any of the apostles; many in the church in Rome had been cast out of the city and were only now trickling back in; many in the church in Rome were about to face some terrible persecution, which I suspect they could already see on the horizon.

And yet there they were. Why? Because of their faith. Because they relied upon God. Because they trusted in God. Because they had been saved by the grace of God.

And the first thing Paul did in this letter was to thank God for the church in Rome because of their faith.