

Starting the Romans Road, part 2

(Romans 1:1-7)

(preached 1/12/19; Pine Grove BC Sun AM)

Introduction

During the construction of the White House, a man walking by the site asked a worker, “what are you doing?”

To which the one worker replied, “I out here making my eight hours so I can get paid on Friday.”

He went a little farther down the street and asked the question to a second worker.

“Oh, I am just cutting some wood for an outer wall on the building behind me.”

As the man walked a little farther, he asked a 3rd and final worker what he was doing.

A grin came on his face, and he replied.

“I am building a house for the president of the United States.”

In life, it is easy to lose sight of the big picture.

The daily tasks often make it easy to forget your purpose and focus.

For instance, why are you here at church this morning?

If I pulled 3 of you on stage and asked, “what are you doing here this morning, I would probably get 3 different answers.”

But why are you here?

What is your purpose in being here?

What is the mission that you are on as a believer in the world?

Well, Paul is going to remind us this morning of our purpose in life in the introduction of his letter to the Roman church.

Now if you weren't here last week, we missed you but we will catch you up to speed on what we did as we began the book of Romans.

This letter to the church in Rome was written around 56 AD while Paul was in Corinth.

You can look at this map up here to remind you of the geography of the Mediterranean world.

Which by the way is important to Bible study.

This is the area of the world where God has been at work since the very beginning, which helps us understand that this is also the place in the world that will never find peace.

However, as Paul writes, the Romans control much of this area of this world.

In fact, the Roman Empire stretched from one end of the Mediterranean sea to the other as Paul pens this letter to the church in Rome.

Which makes this letter so important.

The capital of the Roman Empire was Rome, so the church there would be so instrumental to the spread and influence of Christianity.

And remember, Paul has never visited this church in Rome as he writes them.

He had wanted to go on numerous occasion but had never been able to make it to them.

He will eventually find his way to way as a prisoner, but at this point, he had never laid eyes on this group of believers that he writes to.

Now last week, we took some time in the opening verse to meet Paul.

I showed you an artist's rendering of Paul but we can't be certain of what he looked like, and ultimately it doesn't matter.

All that matters is that Paul was used by God to write this letter.

And we also noted last week that this letter was not a corrective letter, like so many of Paul's letters often were.

In other words, Paul wasn't writing the Romans to address problems in the church there.

He wasn't writing to admonish the Romans to get their lives in line with the truth.

He wasn't writing to warn of false teachers.

He was simply writing an incredible summary of the Christian faith.

The book of Romans defines Christianity.

It defines the gospel.

It points to the centrality of Christ.

It reveals the mind and heart of God.

The book of Romans is the handbook of Christianity, and the good news is that we 16 chapters ahead of us as a church.

Now last week, we only got through 4 verses of the introduction, so let's head back to Romans 1:1-7 and read it again...

***1 Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, [a]called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, 2 which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures, 3 concerning His Son, who was born of a [b]descendant of David according to the flesh, 4 who was declared the Son of God with power [c]by the resurrection from the dead, according to the [d]Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord, 5 through whom we have received grace and apostleship [e]to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for His name's sake, 6 among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ;
7 to all who are beloved of God in Rome, called as [f]saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.***

In this introduction to this glorious letter, Paul lays a great foundation for what is going to follow.

He began by simply describing himself as the one God chose to write this book.

And we noted that Paul would have been the most unlikely of candidates for God to use in his past life because Paul was once a persecutor of Christianity.

As a Pharisee of Pharisee...

As a Jew of Jews, Paul detested Christianity.

He approved the stoning of the first Christian martyr named Stephen.

He arrested and dragged believers out of their home churches.

He did whatever he could to stop the spread of Christianity, yet God is the one who stopped him in his tracks on the way to Damascus.

And God is the one who blinded him with the light of the resurrected Christ, who commissioned Paul to go and preach the gospel to the Jew and Gentile.

Which is exactly what Paul had been doing for the past 20 years of his life as he sits down to write this Christian manifesto called the book of Romans.

You see Paul was a slave of Christ by his own admission.

In verse 1, he calls himself a doulos of Jesus Christ which is the Greek word for slave.

Paul had given up all his rights to serve his Master and Lord and King.

And his primary area of service was that of an apostle.

You see that also in verse 1.

Paul was called an apostle.

He was one who was sent with a message.

And what was the message?

The gospel of God.

The good news that God has provided a Savior from sin.

God has provided a substitute for the guilty sinner.

Instead of having to die for your own sins, God has provided His own Son to die in the place of the guilt sinner who comes to Him in faith.

But not only that.

God's Son also lived a perfectly righteous life.

He kept the law perfectly so that his righteousness can be credited to the unrighteous.

Jesus died for those who believe in Him but He also lived sinlessly for those who believe in Him.

And the gospel say that your unrighteousness can be cast on Him while his righteousness is credited to you.

The good news of the gospel is that God declares the guilty innocent and the unrighteous righteous.

It is that gospel that changed Paul's life.

It is that gospel that Paul was sent into the world to proclaim.

It is that gospel that saved us the church, and it is that gospel that the world still needs to hear.

And we noted last week, it is that gospel that God had planned before the foundation of the world.

It is that gospel that he promised to Adam and Eve in the garden.

It is that gospel that was seen in the passover lamb in Egypt.

It is that gospel that the prophets of God predicted would come.

And it is that gospel which was sealed in the perfect life, substitutionary death, and glorious resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Jesus was the one and only God Man.

Born of the flesh in the line of David to signify his 100% humanity.

But also the son of God to signify his 100% deity.

And Paul gets all that out in the first 4 verses of the very first chapter of Romans..

So we have seen the author of this book and the message of this book, but what is the point of the book?

What is mission that Paul has in mind as he begins this book?

What does he want the reader to do in response to what he is about to write?

That brings us to verse 5..

III. The Mission (5)

Let's look at it again..

5 through whom we have received grace and apostleship [e]to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for His name's sake,

Long story short, the mission is to get the message of the gospel into the entire world.

Now that might sound like Christianity 101, but it is still the mission.

The obedience of faith among all the Gentiles is a call for Paul's readers and for every Christian hereafter to make it their mission to see unbelievers come to faith in the gospel of Christ.

So as you serve the church by cooking or cleaning or teaching Sunday School,,,

As you serve the church by giving and attending and studying your lesson, you have to understand that those things further your mission.

Don't be like the White House construction worker who just your work in the church as a job to do.

Don't see it a task to be accomplished.

Always keep the big picture in mind.

You may be sweeping or wiping a nose in the nursery but ultimately you are doing what is necessary to bring about the obedience of faith among all the nations of the world.

As you sit here this morning, you are being equipped to bring about about the obedience of faith among all the nations of the world.

Like Paul, we serve a greater purpose.

We weren't saved to sit and simmer.

We were saved to boil over with the gospel message to see the obedience of faith for all the nations of the world.

Tunnel vision is deadly for the Christian.

When we forget the bigger mission and the bigger purpose of who we are as believers in this age, we either grow complacent or get discouraged.

And when that happens, the church suffers.

Now the good news is that you are equipped to bring about the obedience of faith of unbelievers in the world.

And how are you equipped?

Well, look back at the beginning of verse 5.

5 through whom we have received grace and apostleship

If you look back at the end of verse 4, Paul is pointing to Jesus at the centerpiece of the gospel message.

Jesus is the son of David and the Son of God.

But Jesus is also equips believers to take that message to the world.

Jesus offer grace and apostleship to his people.

Now how do those two things enable us to the obedience of faith in the unbelieving world?

Let's start with grace.

Grace is simply the unmerited favor and blessing of God.

Grace is getting something that you don't deserve.

Grace is God's blessing despite our sinful nature.

So how does grace help us take the message of the gospel to the world?

Well first of all, those who have received grace from God will preach a gospel of grace alone.

In other words, knowing that you did nothing to earn salvation will ensure that you preach that same gospel to the world.

In terms of Paul's audience, many were former Jews who were raised in a religion of good works.

That is what Judaism has become and still is today.

But God had shown grace to many Jews in opening up their heart to the gospel of Christ.

And the ones who had been delivered from the burden of religion of good works would certainly never preach a gospel of good works.

Second, grace also equips to us to preach the gospel to anyone.

Since grace is not dependent upon anything man can do, we proclaim the message of gospel to everyone.

A final way to grace equips us to take the gospel to the world is that it makes us compassionate and humble.

Look, those who have received grace are humbled by it.

The gospel doesn't fill us with pride, and cause us to spread the message with sword.

Instead, it fills us with humility and compassion, and we seek to extend that compassion to others.

That being said, we also need to realize that we take the message into the world with authority.

This is what apostleship is all about.

We have a message from our king.

We have a master from our master.

We speak the truth for Him.

We are loving and kind and humble and compassionate, but we are confident in our message because we know the One who has sent us.

I have said this before, but I am not the most confident person in the world.

My nature is to doubt and worry and be concerned about what others think.

There are so many things that were delayed in my life for fear of failure and what others would think.

But when I study the word during the week and stand in the pulpit with this open Bible in front of me, bring on the world.

And that is not a confidence in myself, it is a confidence in the King that I speak for and His word that I deliver.

Now understand as we said last week, none of us as capital A apostles.

That a specific office reserved for 12 specific men in a specific time in the church.

But we are small a apostles who are continuing to deliver a message of salvation and truth to the world.

And we do it with grace and authority that are given to us by our Christ.

Now that leads us to take a minute to look at what Paul calls the obedience of faith.

You see the gospel of God is a call to faith.

It is a call to believe in Jesus Christ alone.

The Bible is crystal clear.

No one will make it heaven based upon their obedience to the law.

Good works do not save.

Good deeds are the highway to heaven.

From beginning to end, the way to heaven is faith alone.

In the book of Genesis, Abraham was saved because he believed God.

The same is true of David or Noah or Adam or any other person in the OT who went to heaven.

They all went because of their faith apart from anything they had ever done.

The same is true today.

No one works his way to heaven.

The gospel is a gospel of faith.

A gospel of belief.

A gospel of trust.

But understand this.

All true faith obeys the Lord.

Good works never lead to faith.

But faith always leads to good works.

This is what Paul means by the obedience of faith.

We are messengers who call people to gospel that saves and then produces obedience in the lives of those who are truly saved.

Look, we don't preach a gospel of good works, but we also don't preach a gospel that ignores the fruit of good works after salvation.

There is movement today and there has been a movement in church history in the past 50 years and really all the way back to the first century that denies the need to obey the gospel after salvation.

It has been called a lot of different names throughout the years, but it is often referred to as "free grace theology."

You can look it up and learn more about it if you like, but people who subscribe to free grace theology say that good works after salvation are not required.

In their view, all a person has to do is receive the grace that God offers in the gospel and believe upon Christ and then live as they desire while going to heaven in the end.

Obedience to the Scriptures is not required.

Just say a prayer or walk an aisle or shake the preachers hand and sign a card and you are good to go to heaven when you die, regardless of how you live afterward.

Let me just say this.

That idea is found nowhere in Scripture.

Yes, you need to believe to be saved.

Yes, you can pray to be saved.

Yes, you talk to the preacher, sign a card, shake the hands of the people at church.

But the proof of true salvation is seen your obedience to the Lord after that profession of faith.

The true gospel.

The gospel that saves.

Is a gospel of grace that calls the sinner to believe in Christ alone apart from any good works.

But the evidence of that belief will be seen in a life of good works after you have believed.

I cannot tell you how many people have been duped into believing a gospel that says believe, get baptized, and live as you want afterward yet go to heaven when you die.

There are 1000s of people like that in this county alone but multiply many times over to understand the tragedy of not preaching a gospel that call people to an obedience of faith.

Now, let's be clear here.

Is this a call to perfect obedience after salvation?

No.

But this is a call to a pattern of obedience after salvation.

Look obedience never saves, but the truly saved always display a pattern of obedience to Christ.

And note, this is the gospel that we are called to take to the world.

Paul preached a gospel that called people to faith alone in Christ alone, but that gospel always results in the obedience of those who truly believe.

And our mission is to take that same gospel message to the world..

Now we need to wrap this introduction up in verses 6 -7 of Romans 1, where Paul identifies the recipients of this letter.

We will call this..

IV. The Readers (6-7)

***6 among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ;
7 to all who are beloved of God in Rome, called as
[f]saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father
and the Lord Jesus Christ.***

As Paul ends with verse 5 with a reminder that the gospel goes the Gentile world, it reminds him of those in the Roman church to whom he is writing.

Now, it is highly likely that the church in Rome was founded by converted Jews since most every early Christian was originally Jewish.

In Acts 2, Luke noted that Roman Jews were present in Jerusalem when the Holy Spirit descended to begin the church in 30 AD.

And it likely that these Jewish Christian converts from Rome went back to Rome when persecution broke out in the area around Jerusalem.

Therefore, it is likely that the church there has some Jews in it, but from what Paul says here, it must have had a majority of Gentiles who had come to faith in Christ as well.

So Paul addresses these Gentile believers in verses 6 and 7, but what he says here applies to any believer.

First, he notes that these believers are the called of Jesus Christ.

The Greek work for called is kaleo.

And it simple to summons someone, to invite someone.

These believers in the Roman church were there because God has called them to salvation.

He has summoned them.

He had invited them to believe.

Once again, and we will see this many times over in this letter, the saved are those who are called to salvation by God.

They are his chosen, his elect.

He has summoned them and they responded.

But not only are these beliers called, they are also beloved of God.

It is interested to note that there is often a lot of disagreement on God's calling of believers to salvation, but no one argues over his love of those He calls.

Yet, the reality is that He summons believers to be saved because of his great love for them...

Let me give you an example.

Let's say you want to call your son or daughter on the phone.

You don't dial a series of numbers and hope that one of the people who answer is your child.

No, you dial a specific number to reach your child.

You pick up the phone and dial 7 or more digits knowing that your son or daughter is connected to that number.

And ultimately, why do you call your children.

You dial them because you love them.

If you picked up the phone planning to speak to call your son and dialed my number by accident, you would be nice and maybe even tell me that you love me.

But that wouldn't compare to dialing the right number and hearing your son and even telling him that you love him.

There's just no comparison there.

And let me tell you, all believers are called by God and all believers are loved in a special way by Him.

Yes, God loves the world because all are made in His image.

But he loves the ones he has called in a special.

That was true in the church at Rome, in the church throughout history, and it is true in the church at Pine Grove.

And then Paul notes that those he is writing to are saints.

Saint simply means a holy one, and contrary to what many teach, every believer is a saint.

This is a special designation that many have wrongly given to only certain believers.

A saint is simply a person set apart for God's purposes.

In the OT, the temple was set apart as holy to the Lord.

The priests were set apart as holy to the Lord.

The holy of holies was set apart to the Lord.

The first fruits of a harvest were set apart as holy to the Lord.

In the NT, we don't have those things that are set apart as holy to the Lord.

We are God's people are what is set apart for Him in this age.

We are saints, and we should act as such.

So Paul wraps up his introduction by extended God's grace and peace to all the called and loved saints who read this letter.

Pine Grove, that peace and grace come us to us this morning from the Lord.

The grace that saved us and the peace that we now have with God are now ours because of the finished work of Christ.

May we live and and obey in light of such incredible realities.

So what are we to make of these 7 verses to this letter?

Conclusion

#1 - Fulfill your mission.

If you are saved, your purpose is bring about the obedience of faith in those around you.

Your mission is to declare the truth of the gospel and live in obedience as a way to all other to believe the gospel.

#2 - Utilize your resources.

Jesus has saved you but he has also equipped you to take the gospel to the world.

You were saved by grace so proclaim a gospel of grace to the world.

You were as apostles with the authority of Christ so proclaim with confidence the gospel of God.

#3 - Appreciate your blessings.

Church, you were called though not worthy.

You are loved though unlovable.

You are saints though sinners.

These are the incredible blessings of salvation.

No one in here deserved to be called to salvation, but God is rich in mercy and we all blessed beyond measure.

May we show our appreciation for such underserved blessings by giving our lives in service to Christ.

#4 - Evaluate your life.

I cannot end this message without a return to the dangers of an incomplete gospel.

A gospel that says believe in Christ but live like the devil is no gospel at all.

Yet that gospel has spread like wildfire in the church.

If you are here this morning and claim to be saved, I challenge you to evaluate your life.

Has there been a change of life to accompany the profession of faith?

Has there been putting off of sinful practices and a pattern of living in obedience to the Lord?

If not, believe in the true gospel.

Put your faith in Christ alone and prove that profession is real by the change of life that follows.

This is too important to get wrong.

This is too urgent to delay.

Your life is at stake.

May God give you eyes to see and ears to hear.

Let us pray.