

Ministry of Grace Church

Romans 1:5-12 - Speaker Notes



Background

Paul starts off this section of Romans by explaining that he was sent by Jesus Christ to deliver the good news of salvation to the non-Jews of the world. He reveals here that those who receive and believe this good news all have a few things in common with each other. One of the things we all have in common is what has been done to us. We are saved because we have been called. He also says that because we have been called, there is something that we are supposed to be. We are supposed to be sanctified. And, having been sanctified, there are two things that we are supposed to do. We are supposed to pray, and we are supposed to encourage one another.

Romans 1:5-6

through whom we received grace and apostleship for the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for the sake of His name, among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ;

Called

In the previous four verses Paul talked about the humanity and deity of Jesus Christ. He now says that it is through Jesus Christ that he has received, “**grace and apostleship.**” The word **apostleship** is a transliteration of a form of the Greek word *apostolos*, which means “one who has been sent forth with a mission.” Paul is a disciple of Jesus Christ who was sent on the mission of bringing the good news to the Gentiles.

The next phrase in **Romans 1:5** is a little bit awkward in English: “**for the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles.**” We could translate this as, “**resulting in obedience of faith among all Gentiles.**” That is, God’s plan for Paul’s apostleship is ultimately to produce obedience as a result of faith among all nations.

Finally, Paul gives praise and glory to whom it belongs, “**for the sake of His name,**” Paul knows that the whole purpose of the Christian faith is not our personal glory or satisfaction, and it is not simply to obtain a free ticket into heaven. In the final analysis it really has nothing to do with us at all; it has everything to do with God! It is for the glory of His name. The whole purpose of our salvation--totally undeserved and freely given to us by the grace of God--is to bring praise and glory to God Himself.

The “among whom” in this verse refers to “all nations” from the previous verse. Paul is making a subtle, but very profound, statement about the Roman Christians in this verse. Because they were Roman citizens, they were among the most powerful and dominant people in the world. The Roman people of that day knew this to be true and were arrogant about it, just as Americans have been for the past 100 years.

Spiritually, however, Paul tells them they were simply “among” the other nations. He is telling these people that politically they may have been the elite, but in terms of spirituality, they were not of the chosen tribe of Israel; therefore, they were not much better off spiritually than any of the other Gentiles. But he immediately identifies a subtle difference about them spiritually. He refers to them as “the called.”

When we think of calling someone today, we simply think of calling out their name, or calling them on the phone, without any implication as to their response or lack thereof. This Greek word, however, has a different meaning. It carries with it the notion of a command with the implication that there has been a positive response. Paul explains this calling later in this letter. In **Romans 8:28-30** he says:

And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to His purpose. Because those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brothers; and those whom He predestined, He also called; and those whom He called, He also justified; and those whom He justified, He also glorified.

It is very clear from this passage that those who have been called by God (the called of Jesus Christ) have already been justified (saved) as well. Therefore, we see that Paul is telling these particular Roman citizens that although they are no better spiritually than any other nation due to their heritage, they are very special to God because they are among his “called and chosen” ones.

Romans 1:7

to all who are beloved of God in Rome, called as saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Sanctified

A number of English translations start off this verse with, “to all who are in Rome, beloved of God ...” From these translations it appears that Paul is saying that he is writing to everyone in Rome, proclaiming them to be beloved of God and giving them the title of saints. But that’s not what the Greek sentence structure says. It says, “to the ones who are in Rome, who are beloved of God, who are saints that are called ones.” In other words, the letter is to those people in Rome who are both beloved of God and who are called. This is the same calling that is referred to in the previous verse.

For those of you who don’t believe in the doctrines of election and eternal security, I want to be very clear. The Apostle Paul believed in both of these doctrines and taught them as truth. He believed this of all Christians “... He chose us in Him (Christ) before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him ...” (**Ephesians 1:4**). That’s the sovereignty of God. We are not Christians because we did something; we are Christians because God did something. For that reason, Paul says that we are “saints” who have been called by God. But, you may ask, what about:

For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. (**Romans 10:13**)

That’s mankind’s free will. I absolutely believe that. So how do we reconcile the sovereignty of God and the free will of man? We can’t, but God can, and already has.

Next, how can every Christian be a saint? It does not require special canonization by the church for us to be saints. The Bible teaches very clearly that all believers are saints. I want to emphasize, as we pointed out in the previous verse, that Paul is not saying that the beloved ones of God are referred to as saints, rather that we are called by God to be saints.

What does it mean to be a saint? It means “to be sanctified.” Well then, what does it mean to be sanctified? This comes from the Greek word *hagios*, which means “to be set apart *from* sin and set apart *to* God.” The fundamental idea of the root *hag* means, “separation, consecration, devotion to the service of God, sharing in God’s purity and abstaining from earth’s defilements.”

Now, having completed the salutary portion of this epistle to the Christians in Rome, Paul gets into the meat of his message.

Romans 1:8-10

First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, because your faith is being proclaimed throughout the whole world. For God, whom I serve in my spirit in the gospel of His Son, is my witness as to how without ceasing I make mention of you, always in my prayers earnestly asking, if perhaps now at last by the will of God I may succeed in coming to you.

Praying

Paul now says a prayer of thanksgiving for the Roman Christians. He is thankful to God, through Jesus Christ, that the faith of the Roman Christians is a world-renowned faith. Imagine that! A group of people with such a strong faith that it has become known throughout the known world. A pagan world, at that! Now, that’s a witness!

Notice that it is God (the Father) *to* whom Paul prays, and it is Jesus (the Son) *through* whom he prays. Paul does not pray to Jesus, but through Jesus. The Greek text is very clear that Paul is thankful *to* God *through* Jesus Christ. In the book of Matthew, when Jesus was teaching his disciples to pray, he instructed them:

Pray, then, in this way: ‘Our Father who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. (Matthew 6:9)

And, as part of the upper room discourse, after He had washed the disciples’ feet, he told them:

And on that day you will not question Me about anything. Truly, truly, I say to you, if you ask the Father for anything in My name, He will give it to you. “Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be made complete. (John 16:23-24)

We know that God listens to the heart, not the words. But when someone begins their prayer with “Dear Jesus,” I suspect their intentions are good, but they are uninformed or misinformed. We are to pray to the Father, not the Son. There is a distinct order set-up within the Godhead with the Son willingly submitting himself to the Father, and the Spirit willingly submitting Himself to both the Father and the Son. It serves as an example to us of how we are to submit to authorities both within the church and in civil government. Therefore, even though the Father and Jesus are equal, there is a specific order established. We should be directing our prayers to God the Father in the name of Jesus (with His authority) or, as Paul says it, through Jesus.

Paul’s prayer here is a prayer of thanksgiving. He gives thanks for the faith of the Roman Christians. What we often overlook is that the Christians in Rome were living in one of the most pagan, Christian-hating societies that ever existed. To live a life as a devoted Christian in the midst of that society took a lot of faith.

This verse tells us that Paul prayed constantly for the Roman believers. He starts out by saying, “**For God ... is my witness.**” Paul is making a very strong appeal that the following statement is, indeed, true. He calls on the witness of Him who has knowledge of all things, God himself. Obviously, the readers of this letter can’t check out the facts of his statement by asking God, but that’s not the point. The point is that Paul does not swear, since the Lord Jesus himself taught that swearing is wrong (see [Matthew 5:33-37](#)). Instead, he appeals to a reliable witness.

Paul then states that he serves God in his spirit. He is saying that his service to God is not just on the surface but is with the very essence of his being, his spirit. Paul then explains that his service is in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Finally, he tells the Roman Christians that he prays for them constantly. Paul was known for being a prayer warrior. He prayed a lot, and a lot of his prayers were for churches, both those which he helped start and those he had never visited (like the Roman church).

We don’t know if he regularly prayed at a particular time of the day (every morning or every evening) or if he simply prayed all day long. Certainly, he had to take some time to study the Old Testament scriptures and the New Testament writings of other Apostles, and he had to take time to prepare the marvelous messages that he preached. It is entirely possible, however, that whenever he was not specifically engaged in some other spiritual activity, Paul was praying, and he says that he prayed ceaselessly for the Roman Christians.

Paul had never been to Rome, therefore he asked God to fulfill that lacking which he felt. He really wanted to see and meet the Christians in Rome, possibly because of the reputation they had regarding their faith. More likely, as he says in the next verse, it was because he had some further teaching that he wanted to impart to them. Personally, I would love to go to Rome, to see all the historic places, but that’s not what was on Paul’s heart. His heart was for the believers in Rome. Once again, I am humbled by his singleness of purpose. Paul was so sold out to God that serving Him was all he cared about.

As we learn in the book of Acts, God answered Paul’s prayer, and he finally got to see Rome approximately three years after writing this letter. However, it surely was not in the manner that Paul expected, for he arrived in chains. In spite of the ignominy of Paul’s condition, however, many Roman Christians came out and walked the last day or two of the journey with Paul as they welcomed him with honor into their city.

Romans 1:11-12

For I long to see you so that I may impart some spiritual gift to you, that you may be strengthened; that is, to be mutually encouraged, while among you, by each other’s faith, both yours and mine.

Encouraging

Paul now explains why he wanted to go to Rome. He wanted to give something to the Christians there. The word translated “impart” (“share” in some translations) is *metadidōmi*, meaning “to share or to communicate something.” In the church today, we often talk about “sharing” an experience with someone else. That is, we want to tell it to them in a way in which they will share in the joy or sorrow of the experience. This is precisely what Paul is talking about. He wants to give the Roman Christians something that can be shared among them.

Paul then tells them that what he wants to impart to them is a “**spiritual gift.**” Some have claimed this means that Paul wanted to impart a “miraculous gift of the spirit,” which supposedly the apostles had the power to give to others. However, this interpretation is unnatural and forced as there is no place

in the scriptures where this expression denotes the power of working miracles. In fact, the explanation of this gift is given in the next verse, “to be mutually encouraged, while among you, by each other’s faith, both yours and mine.” Paul simply wanted to share more truths of the Gospel and the glories of a life in Christ with the Christians in Rome. He wanted to encourage them by teaching them about a life of faith, and he, himself, wanted to be encouraged by their own accounts of faithful living.

His purpose in wanting to do this is, “that you may be strengthened.” That is, Paul wanted the Christians in Rome to have a firm doctrinal footing. He knew that faith in Christ and the surrendered life are essentials for Christian growth. He also knew that learning the truth of God’s word would result in these Christians becoming firmly grounded in their faith, able to withstand the storms of life.

This verse explains why Paul wanted to visit Rome and the Christians there and why he wanted to share with them a gift of spiritual truths. He wanted to see them more firmly established in their faith, and he wanted to jointly be comforted with them. It is clear from the grammatical construction that Paul was not chastising them for needing more spiritual gifts. He knew that these people were living in the midst of a pagan society that was so focused on national expansion (and the riches that it brought), that they were in need of the truth of God’s word. In the middle of this type of sensual and indulgent living, the Roman Christians had shown themselves to be of remarkable faith in pursuing their Savior, but it was not easy any more than it is easy to be a Christian in today’s western, hedonistic society. They needed some encouragement and some comforting just as Paul did.

This may come as a surprise to some of you, but the Apostle Paul needed to be comforted and encouraged. Sure, he was a giant of the faith (though apparently short in stature). Sure, he could perform miracles. Sure, he had an understanding of spiritual truths with a clarity that few men of the time had and that few have had since, but the apostle also had a sin nature like you and I do. Later in this letter, he explains some of his inner struggles that he had with that sin nature. Right now, he says that he needed to be with other Christians, and he needed to be comforted.

As Christians, we all need comforting at times. God knows this and has sent us a special comforter, the Holy Spirit. Jesus even referred to Him as our *paraklētos*, our comforter, or our advocate:

“But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you. (John 14:26)

So What?

Earlier we talked about the four things that Paul says all Christians have in common. We are all called by God, we are all saints set-apart for God’s use, we are all to pray to God, and we are all supposed to be encouraging each other. Let’s look at these four things one more time.

Called - Remember, the Romans were politically and militarily the most powerful nation in the world. But spiritually, they were not. The people of Israel were God’s elite. Unfortunately, Israel had rejected their Messiah. So now, Paul had been sent to the Gentiles. God has a habit of selecting the least respected and lowest class of people to bless. That’s why He called the Romans. Remember, the criteria that God uses to call people to repentance?

For consider your calling, brothers, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may abolish the things that are, (1 Corinthians 1:26-28)

And why did God call the lowest of the low, the scum of the earth and the dumb of the earth (incidentally, remember that's us)?

so that no flesh may boast before God. (1 Corinthians 1:29)

As Paul tells us in Ephesians, we have been saved by grace. Our salvation is a gift from God. We didn't do any works to deserve it. In fact, God's purpose for our salvation is that we will do works for His glory. So, our sole responsibility as Christians is to be hard at work for Him so that He will get all the glory. That should humble us all.

The thing I want us all to take away from this is the privilege and honor we have as Christians that we have been individually selected by God and called to a life of holiness and service to the King of Kings. What a great honor! Anything less than complete submission and obedience to Him does not meet His expectation of us and is a waste of time and effort.

Humbling, isn't it? Are we up to the challenge?

Sanctified - We are called to be saints. That means that we are to be sanctified, set apart from the world system and its sinful lusts. We are to be different. Not weirdly different, but delightfully different. Remember that the root of the word translated "**sanctified**" means, *devotion to the service of God, sharing in God's purity and abstaining from earth's defilements*

The world we live in today is becoming more and more like first century Rome every day. Everywhere we look we see signs of pagan humanism and a bias against true Christianity. To live in a world like this, submitted to the one true God, takes faith and not just a little bit.

Praying - How does your prayer life stack up against Paul's? If you're like me, you feel woefully inadequate compared to him. Paul apparently had a daily routine that included considerable time in prayer, and it wasn't because he had nothing else to do. With everything we pack into our days, it seems silly that we can't even find 15 minutes each day to pray for ourselves and for others. Why don't we do something about that?

Encouraging - Is your devotion to God and your desire to serve Him so strong that you can think of nothing else? Or is your desire for everything else so strong that you seldom think about serving Him? That's something that we all need to pray about ... without ceasing!

Do you sometimes come to church and hear a message that reminds you of all you should be doing for God? And – when you do, do you feel like saying, that's all well and good, Pastor, but let's get real, I have a life to live in a world that doesn't support my desire to be more spiritual. It may be easy for you, but not for me. I need help and I need encouragement every day.

We get so focused on ourselves and our own problems that we forget that others in the church have just as many problems. Some have a lot more than we do. Instead of complaining about our own problems, let's practice being an encouragement to others.

Remember, the Apostle Paul needed encouragement. We all do! That's why we should all go out of our way to encourage other believers. This week why not encourage and comfort someone who has blessed you.

Let's pray.