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Okay, we are going to be embarking on a new study this evening in the epistle that Paul wrote to the Romans. In preparation for our study, let's take a moment to clear our minds and prepare our hearts and seek the ministry of God the Holy Spirit as we look into the truth of God's Word. Father, we thank you as always for the wonderful opportunity that we have to assemble with believers of like mind and be ministered to by the Holy Spirit as we look into the riches of your Word.

We pray that as we begin our study of Romans tonight that God the Holy Spirit will enlighten us. We pray that we will have wisdom and discernment as we study this wonderful book. And we pray that the things that we learn will change us on the inside so that our lives will reflect the glory of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

We ask it in His name, Amen. Turn with me, if you will, to the book of Romans. I am going to do what we normally do and not spend a whole lot of time on introduction, but it is necessary in a book of this length, 16 chapters, to our understanding to have some idea of when and how it came to be written, to whom it was written, and what the circumstances are.

And as always, these details will help us understand the content of the book and hopefully keep us from perhaps misinterpreting some of the things that are in the book. So, I have a few points of introduction here. Four, namely.

First of all, in the different types of writing that we encounter in the Bible, we have seen in our past studies that some of the books of the Bible are narrative. They tell a story and give us a record of historical events. We have some books that are prophetic or didactic, such as the major and minor prophetic books in the Old Testament that contain a revelation from God to Israel through a prophet.

We have the epistles of the New Testament that are a different genre, and that is what Romans falls into. It is not a narrative account. It is not a prophetic book.

It isn't a law-type book, such as we have in some of the books of Moses. This is an epistle. So, we need to understand something about epistles and understand why there is such a thing as an epistle, since that's what we are embarking on a study of.

There are 27 New Testament books, and 21 of them are epistles. So, it will benefit us to understand a few observations about epistles. Of course, there are no epistles in the Old Testament.

If we stop and think about the circumstances under which the Old Testament is written and under which the New Testament was written, this begins to make sense to us. Epistles were written by the apostles to the new church, the body of Christ as it was just beginning to be formed, and this

is in contrast to the writings of the Old Testament, which were addressed to the nation of Israel. None of the books of the Old Testament are addressed to anyone except Israel, even though they may contain songs of warning to the surrounding nations of Israel.

They are to Israel through a prophet under the ministry of God the Holy Spirit, and Israel is a centralized body of believers. The group of people called by God's name are localized. Even when they are in captivity, they are still localized.

In the New Testament, instead of gathering the people who believe in God into a single location in a single nation, we have just the opposite. People who believe in Jesus Christ wind up spreading throughout the world, and so you have Peter writing his letter to the dispersion, to the Jewish Christians who have been scattered abroad, and then he gives all of these locations, Cappadocia and so forth, where they have scattered. Because the people of God were scattered, and would then gather in small pockets called local churches, it was necessary for the people who functioned much like the prophets, i.e. the apostles, to have some means of communicating with them, so the apostles were sent forth.

That's what the name apostle means. Not only did they themselves go forth and travel about to minister to these pockets of believers, but they also sent letters, and sent messengers, and sent deputies in the form of their assistants. This is why Paul sent Titus and Timothy, and why you have Barnabas and Silas and several of the other associates of the apostles.

It was necessary to cover a lot of territory. So that's the circumstance under which epistles came to be written and sent forth. These letters would initially be addressed to a church in a specific region, but as we have seen in Ephesians and Colossians, for example, Paul encouraged the reproduction and distribution of these letters to other churches.

So he told the people in Colossae, when you have read this letter, take it over to the people at Laodicea. Our book of Ephesians is really the letter to the Laodiceans, and he told the Colossians, get a copy of what I sent to Laodicea, which is just down the valley from you, and have it read in your church. So these letters, even though they are addressed to an initial audience, were designed to be distributed and studied by all believers.

So we are on a good foundation in studying these letters, even though we were not a part of the original recipients, because they contain timeless truth that applies to all believers, especially in this age. So that's our first point. Romans is an epistle.

Epistles were a specific type of communication that came into being in the church age because of the unique circumstances of the birth and growth of the church. Secondly, the communication that came in the form of an epistle actually involved several people. You have the author of the epistle.

In this case, the author is the Apostle Paul. Normally, however, the apostle or the author did not

sit down in his own handwriting and generate these letters. They were usually copied down by an amanuensis or a scribe, a secretary.

And that is the case in Romans. We will find when we get to the final couple of chapters that a man named Tertius acts as Paul's secretary and physically writes down Paul's thoughts for the Romans. And in studying the other epistles, we find that often the secretary will append his greetings at the end of the letter, just as Paul does.

We saw in our recently completed study of Galatians that the bulk of the letter had been set down by a secretary and then Paul at the conclusion writes in his own hand. And he says, see with what large letters I write to you with my own hand. And this was a departure from the rest of the letter.

So four people wound up being involved. You have the author as one. You have the secretary as two.

Most of these letters were delivered by a messenger. Even though the Roman Empire had a postal system, it wasn't like the United States Post Office where you'd look at a stamp and stick it on a document and it would be reliably delivered. The Roman postal system was primarily designed for official government traffic.

Personal letters, and particularly in times of persecution, you wouldn't necessarily want to entrust your Christian epistle to the enemy. So these were hand-delivered by messengers. And Paul often comments on who the messenger is and what other information the messenger will bring along with the letter.

We see this at the end of many of the books, and we will see it here in Romans. Romans is interesting because the messenger for this book is going to be a lady. Her name is Phoebe, and we will see her introduced before too long.

So the author, the secretary, then the messenger. And from looking at Acts, we know that the messenger would often have been given verbal information from the author that would be transmitted verbally along with the substance of the letter. There is an interesting study on this over in Acts where when the apostolic council met in Jerusalem to decide what the Gentile believers should and should not do, they wrote it up in a letter, and they basically, in a nutshell, said you need to abstain from blood and from things strangled and gross forms of immorality.

And the messengers who brought that letter, that short letter from the apostles, then filled in the gaps, and you have an account in Acts of the teaching that came along with that letter. And it's possible then in many of these other letters because the messengers were close associates of the apostles, they might be a guest speaker at that church and elaborate on and perhaps even teach from that letter that was authored by the apostle. So the messenger is an important person, especially with regard to the immediate audience that received this letter.

Finally, of course, you have the recipients. And in the case of Romans, we know that the author is Paul. We know that the scribe is Tertius.

We know that the messenger is Phoebe. And we will see this in detail later. And we know that the recipients are Romans.

We need to find out a little bit more about these Romans. And so our third point here is who are the Romans? It is a common misconception, and it's actually a church tradition that goes all the way back to the early church fathers, that these believers in Rome were evangelized by Peter and that Peter basically started the church in Rome. Upon closer examination, we find that this is not the case.

It doesn't mean that Peter was never in Rome. But at the time that Paul writes this letter, these believers have not previously been ministered to by any apostle. We know this from, among other things, from Romans 15 and verse 20, where Paul states the fact that he has no desire to build on another's foundation.

If Peter had been in Rome and had founded this church, Paul would not be writing this letter. He does not build on another man's foundation. His ministry and his calling is to those that have not previously been reached with the good news of Jesus Christ and with the teaching of the Word of God.

We also know from details which we won't go into great depth on, from studying Acts and the chronology of the movement of the apostles, that Peter is still in Jerusalem at the time that this letter is written. Peter has not yet gone to Rome. So the question becomes, we know from studying this book, that Paul has not yet been to Rome either.

He talks about how, in this first chapter, how often he wishes he could have seen these people, but he's never been there. Peter hasn't been there. Paul hasn't been there.

Where did these believers come from? And that is a mystery that is not solved for us by direct statements of Scripture. We know from indirect references, such as who was present in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. There were Jewish believers and proselytes to Judaism, Gentile proselytes to Judaism, from Rome in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost.

And we also know from secular historians, such as Tacitus and Eusebius and Josephus, that there were Jewish communities in Rome going back even before the time of Christ. It is apparent to us that at the point that Christianity came into being, because there were strong ties between Jerusalem and Rome in Jewish communities, that when Jewish believers came to Christ, this same information traveled to Rome. And many of the initial Roman converts were Jewish believers and proselytes, Gentile proselytes that were already worshiping in Rome with the Jews.

And when Christianity came and many of the Jewish believers came to Christ, the Gentile

proselytes, a lot of them were converted as well. And this is important for us to understand, because we are going to see many, many references in Romans to the Old Testament. And yet we are also going to see that this is a largely Gentile group to whom Paul is writing.

Why does Paul appeal to the authority of the Old Testament in talking to Roman Gentile believers? That leads us to believe that he knows their background and that they have worshiped with Jews in the synagogue and have heard the Old Testament Scriptures taught from the Septuagint. It is also interesting that most of Paul's quotes in Romans will match the Septuagint rather than the Hebrew Old Testament Scriptures. And we know this because there are significant enough differences between the Septuagint, which is the Greek translation of the Old Testament that was done some two to three hundred years before the time of Christ.

Paul, of course, was well versed in Hebrew and in Aramaic and knew the Old Testament from the original, but when he quotes it, even when it is slightly different from the Hebrew, he doesn't correct it. He quotes it in the Septuagint because he knows that is what his audience is familiar with. The Roman believers know the Bible from Greek.

Greek was the common language in the Roman Empire. We often think that Latin was, but most of the territories that Rome conquered and brought under the umbrella of the Empire spoke Greek. And so the Koine Greek was the common language of the day.

And so these believers evidently are familiar with the Septuagint and that is why Paul feels free to quote from it so often in Romans. So we find that there is a background to which Paul is going to appeal. These people have believed in God in times past, many of them, and so he is going to use that as a foundation to build on.

Now finally, we need to understand, after having looked at a little bit of the nature of the epistle to the Romans, who wrote it and so forth, and who is receiving it, where does this fit in the context of Paul's ministry? The epistles of Paul, and this is our fourth point of introduction if you are keeping track, where does this fit in terms of the classification of the writings of Paul that we have in the New Testament? There is a helpful sort of breakdown for Paul's writings that classifies them in four different groups. You may or may not be familiar with these and we may or may not agree with the labels for them, but it is a convenient way to group and organize the writings of Paul. And this is chronological in sequence.

We'll go from the earliest to the latest of Paul's writings. The first group that is common when we talk about Paul's epistles are what are known as the eschatological or the prophetic writings. Eschatology, of course, is the theological category that deals with things to come.

And in this category of Paul's writings, which are also the two earliest as far as we can tell of his epistles, are 1st and 2nd Thessalonians. You'll recall that both of those Thessalonian epistles make reference to the coming of Jesus Christ and the we who are alive and remain being caught up together with those that have preceded us in death and so forth. And so I think primarily

because of those sections, they are classified as eschatological epistles, 1st and 2nd Thessalonians.

These were written during Paul's second missionary journey. We don't have any writings, as far as we can tell, from any earlier time in Paul's career. The twelve years that we saw him refer to in Galatians, the first missionary journey, which included a passage through the realm of Galatia, we don't have any writings from that period.

The earliest are 1st and 2nd Thessalonians from Paul's second missionary journey. The second category is what are called the soteriological epistles. Soteriology is from the Greek *soterios*, which is a reference to salvation.

And these include Galatians, 1st and 2nd Corinthians, and Romans. This group of letters, Galatians, 1st and 2nd Corinthians, and Romans, were written during Paul's third missionary journey. Now, for references, Paul's second missionary journey is recorded by Luke in Acts 15.36-18.22. Basically, Acts 15-18 gives us the account of Paul's second missionary journey during which he wrote 1st and 2nd Thessalonians.

His third missionary journey, during which he wrote these soteriological, or salvation-related epistles, is recorded from Acts 18.23-21.14. Third missionary journey, Acts 18.23-21.14. I personally think that this second group of epistles is a little bit misnamed, although we tend to view them as dealing primarily with salvation. We know from our study of Galatians that that book concerns itself primarily with the way a believer lives his life. That is also true of 1st and 2nd Corinthians, and it's true of Romans.

So a better name for this might be... I'm not sure it's better, it's longer. I would call these, if I was going to dream up a big theological name for it, the peripatological epistles. *Peripateo* is our Greek word that means our walk, the Christian walk.

You could call these the walk epistles. 1st and 2nd Corinthians, Galatians, and Romans deal primarily with the Christian's walk. And they were written during the third missionary journey.

Now the third classification of epistles has been called the ecclesiological. Ecclesiology is the study of the church from *ecclesia*, which is the word for assembly. *Ecclesia* originally referred to the assembly of the synagogue, and later on it came to be used of the assembly for worship in the church.

These were written by Paul during his first Roman imprisonment, so they are also sometimes called the prison epistles. These ecclesiological or prison epistles include Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon, and Philippians. Four books.

Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon, and Philippians. These were all written while Paul was imprisoned in Rome. And this period in his career is recorded for us in Acts 28, the last half of the

chapter, Acts 28, 16 through 31.

And of course that's where Paul's life history as recorded by Luke ends. Paul is still alive under house arrest when the book of Acts draws to a close. The final group is generally called the pastoral epistles.

These are easy to remember because they have the names of the pastors on them. This is 1 Timothy, Titus, and 2 Timothy. And I give them to you in that order because that's the order in which they were written.

1 Timothy and Titus were written after Paul was released from his first Roman imprisonment and he was doing some traveling. 2 Timothy is the last letter that we have from Paul and Paul had been imprisoned once again in Rome. So this is his second Roman imprisonment during which 2 Timothy is written.

So what does all of this do for us? It helps us to organize these letters chronologically. It gives us a very, very general idea of what they concern themselves with. We have the first group, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, which contains the look toward the future, the look toward the return of Jesus Christ in a detailed fashion.

The second group that has been called the salvation or soteriological epistles but are really the Christian walk epistles. The third are the ecclesiastical, the Ephesian, Colossians, and Philippians. These were written to churches about primarily church matters.

A lot of church life is addressed in Ephesians. But also there's a strong overlap there because Ephesians and Colossians talk a lot about the Christian walk as well. But it helps us to group them separately because they were written in a later period during Paul's imprisonment.

So as we come to Romans, we realize that Romans is written in that earlier phase of Paul's ministry, the second missionary journey. And it helps us realize also that he is going to be talking about the Christian walk just as he does in the other letters that were written during this period, 1 and 2 Corinthians and Galatians. All of this information is important to us because it gives us a context and a framework to hang the theology on that we're going to study.

And it's important because let's back up and think about this. Paul has been journeying around. Right now as he writes this letter to the Romans, he is in Corinth.

He's located in the city of Corinth. He's ministering there. And he is addressing himself to a group of believers, most of whom he has never seen.

We're going to find out at the end of the book, which we're going to look at tonight, by the way. We're going to start the book by ending the book. And I do this for a couple of reasons.

First of all, I think it's really important for us to complete our understanding of the context, and a

lot of that is in the last half of chapter 15 and in chapter 16. Secondly, because so many times we start a study of Romans and we never get to the end, and so hardly anybody has ever studied chapter 15 and 16. So we're going to start with that.

But primarily because there's a very interesting set of parentheses or brackets that surround the doctrinal content of this letter. The people who got the letter initially knew the information that's in the first part and the last part, and it was by way of reminder and by way of greeting. For us, if we get those brackets firmly in our mind, it's going to give us a framework and a context to put the doctrinal portion of the book in.

So I doubt that anyone has ever started Romans by going to the end, but that's what we're going to do tonight. And when we do that, we're going to see that Paul had not met most of these people, but there are people there that he does know, and so he's going to use that as a foundation. So without further ado, let's go to Romans chapter 1 and start this very extraordinary letter.

Paul begins the letter by identifying himself. This is a practice that we still follow today when we put our name on the outside of the envelope and our return address. In these days, the scroll itself was sealed with a bulla of wax, and someone didn't know when they saw the scroll unless they were told what it contained or who it was from.

By breaking the seal and unrolling this parchment or this piece of papyrus, one would see the greeting and be able to tell who it was from. Our letters today, if you don't have an address on the outside, you've got to look down at the bottom to find out who it's from. But they had a much more practical custom, and so Paul identifies himself here with his name, Paulos in the Greek.

This is not his given name as a Jewish man. His given name, as we know from Acts, is Saul. But Paul never uses that name of himself in any of his writings.

His writings, which are all addressed primarily to Gentiles, always start with the name by which he was known to Gentiles. This is his Roman citizenship name. In Latin, this would have been P-A-U-L-L-U-S, Paulos.

By virtue of his birth in the city of Tarsus, one of the benefits that Paul had was being a Roman citizen by birth. It's just like today, if someone jumps the border and has a child in the United States, that child is a United States citizen by virtue of birth. The Roman Empire had granted a special status to Tarsus, and one of those privileges was that anyone born there was automatically a Roman citizen.

They didn't have to purchase their citizenship. They didn't have to earn it. It didn't have to be granted to them by a gift.

They had it by right of birth. Paul was born in Tarsus, and so he's a Roman citizen by birth. He

therefore needs a Roman name, and his Roman name is Paulos, which comes across in Greek as P-A-U-L-O-S or Paulos.

We have a couple of men who share that name in our local group here, and that's where it comes from. It meant, oddly enough, little in Latin and came across in the Greek transliteration meaning the same thing. And I think that not only did Paul use this name because of the fact that it was his Gentile name, so to speak, but also because of his desire to invoke not his own personal authority but the authority of God when he conducted his ministry.

And he continues in that vein here. He says, Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ. And this is the Greek word *doulos*.

This comes down even today. The plebes at the Air Force Academy are called *doulis*, and this is from the Greek word *doulos*. It means you're a slave.

However, in the Roman Empire, this word had lost a lot of its negative connotation because in the Roman Empire there were three slaves for every freed man. Seventy-five percent of the people who populated the Roman Empire were *douloi* or slaves. And they did not only occupy menial positions, but they also were heads of household.

They ran companies. They ran shipping and fishing and trade industries. And the term came to be used not so much of someone that was in a subservient form of bondage as someone who served a master or an owner.

This owner would be called a *curios* in many cases, a lord, someone who was a nobleman and had the finances to own property or own business or whatever. The manager of the lord's property or the lord's business would be his *doulos*, his servant. And so it didn't necessarily have a debasing connotation.

On the contrary, it meant that someone held a responsibility and had a devoted sense of duty to the lord or the *curios*. This person might also be called a *despotes*, where we get the word *despot*. And, of course, *despot* now means someone that is an abusive type of ruler.

But a *despotes* in Greek or in the Roman Empire simply meant someone who was a *curios*, who had servants to manage their affairs and so forth. Paul identifies himself as a servant, bond servant, of Jesus Christ. And this establishes the direction of Paul's devotion.

He spends his energy, he devotes his life to the service of his *curios*, the lord Jesus Christ. So we know that this is a spiritual service. This is, on Paul's part, a voluntary service.

It is a service to which he has been called. And we have this in verse 1, Paul, a bond servant of Jesus Christ, called an apostle. If you have a New King James as I do, you'll see that the words to be are in italics because there is no verb there.

The word called is *kleitos*, which is the noun form from *kaleo* and it means called. And then we have another noun, *apostle*, *apostelo*. And we know from times past that *apostelo* means one sent.

It doesn't necessarily have to be a person. When the Roman Empire would send a fleet of ships, they could refer to it and we have some writings that have been preserved down to the present, some secular Greek writings that talk about a fleet of ships that were sent on a mission and they were *apostelo*. They were the emissary of the empire sent to accomplish the bidding of the emperor.

Called here tells us that this is an opportunity that God presented to Paul. God called him to this. We know from studying this, and we'll get into this later on when we study calling in detail, let me just say by way of introduction that calling is not an effectual call.

We know, for example, from Peter's writing that saints are called to be holy, and yet many of us, even though we have received the calling to holiness from God, a lot of us aren't holy. That is a calling from God, just like apostleship is a calling from God. But it requires a decision to fulfill that calling.

The calling does not accomplish the function. The calling is an opportunity. The calling is an invitation.

The calling is a command from God to perform a certain function. Paul's specific calling was to be sent forth to proclaim the good news about Jesus Christ. And he responded to that calling, and he went forth, and he did proclaim that gospel.

But it's important for us to understand that there is no precedent in Scripture for seeing an effectual call, a calling that produces the result just by virtue of being issued, that because the call is given, there is an involuntary response on the part of the callee. And this is something that has crept into our theology over the years. It's an important part of Reformed theology, and it has even crept into our understanding of salvation where we believe that the effectual grace is administered to believers by the Holy Spirit at the point of hearing the gospel, and that the Holy Spirit basically issues an effectual call that moves us to respond.

But that's not the case. Calling is something that can be rejected. Jonah was called to go to Nineveh, and he went the other way, and God used discipline to wake him up, and yet God did not force him to go to Nineveh.

There were many who were called, but few who were chosen. And why is that? Because the calling doesn't always receive a positive response. Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called as an apostle might be a better translation because these two words are put right next to one another.

And then he says, separated to the gospel of God. This word separated is interesting in Greek. It is a base or root word plus a prefix.

The root word is horizo. It's the word from which we get horizon. What is the horizon? The horizon is the boundary of what we can see on the earth.

And in Greek, horizo meant to mark off, to designate, to circle something, to say this is designated to be this. This is marked off for a purpose. The prefix that is put on this word here is apa, A-P-O, which means from.

So in this case, Paul says he has been marked off from some larger group. He has been designated from within a larger group. And we know that apostles come from the larger group of believers, and they were set apart in that generation for a special purpose.

Paul was marked off, even after having been called, he was marked off for a special purpose. Even in the group of apostles, Paul is marked out and circled because he is the apostle to the Gentiles. He has a specific mission within the ranks of apostles, and that is the gospel of God.

And he is going to amplify this on down. The word gospel, of course, is euangelos. Eu is the prefix, which means good, and angelos means message.

Angelos was a very common word. Angelos could mean messenger. The angelizo was the process by which... So what Paul is telling us here is that he is separated with a view toward.

You see here in English it says separated to, but that word to there is the word eis. And in many contexts, when you run across that word, its root word meaning is into. Eis means into, ek means out from.

But it came to mean unto, or with a view toward. And many puzzling passages of Scripture start to become clear when we find this word eis, and we recognize that it means with a view toward. We are looking into something or toward something.

Here, Paul has been marked out from the rest with a view toward the good news of God, the gospel of God. So now we have two remaining concepts in this first verse of Romans, and we're going very quickly. We could stop and do a complete doctrinal categorical study on virtually every word in this verse, but our purpose tonight is introduction.

Our purpose is to see what Paul is up to in writing this letter. So he identifies himself, and he invokes his divine authority for writing this letter in the very first verse. He is Paul.

He is a servant of Jesus Christ. He has been called to be an apostle. That puts him in a special category.

He has been marked out, even among the apostles, with a view toward the communication of, we

might fill in, the gospel or the good news of God. Now, of God here comes across as something ambiguous in English. Does it mean from God? Does it mean about God? And in this case, this is a genitive of source in the Greek, which means that it is the news or the message that came from God.

And he's going to further identify this good news from God in verses 2 through 4. This gospel from God is the one that he promised beforehand. And this is another compound word made up of several parts. It has two prefixes, and then it has a main part.

The main part is still, *angelizo* or *angolos*, which we know means message. But when you put the word *epi* in front of that, *epi* is a preposition that means upon. And when you put *epi-angolos*, this was a promise.

This was a message upon something or a message about something. And so it came to mean promise. But then in front of that compound word is put the prefix *pro*.

Pro means before. To profess is to stand up and fess before someone. The progenitor of a tribe or a people is the guy that came first.

He's the progenitor. And so this is a previous promise. Now this same prefix is used on words that we talk about in terms of foreordained or predestined.

Pre and *pro* come from the same basic place. And a lot of times people want to say that this is something that was fixed in concrete and was determined and could not be changed in times past simply because it came before. The specific way that it's used is foreknowledge.

The word foreknowledge in Greek has this word *pro* stuck onto the word foreknowledge, *genosko*, *progenosko*. Well, in all of the other places where we see *pro*, it means before. Paul even uses the word *progenosko* in Acts.

He says, I was a very zealous Jew. If you don't believe me, just ask the people who knew me before in Jerusalem. They *progenoskoed* me.

Well, it's the same word that is used other places for God's foreknowledge. God foreknew. In Romans 8, we will come across this.

Whom he foreknew, them he predestined. And a lot of theological baggage gets attached to foreknowledge. It's a very simple concept.

God knew it beforehand. In this case, he promised something beforehand. And what did he promise? He promised the content of this good news.

This good news first began to be revealed in the form of promises in the Old Testament. This gospel that Paul preaches was promised before through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures. And

it has a specific content in verse 3. It concerns his son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

He was born of the seed of David according to the flesh. He was declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness by the resurrection from the dead. And this is, in a nutshell, the gospel that Paul preaches.

It's why he was called. It's why he was sent. It's why he was separated out.

He doesn't concentrate on human problems, does he? He doesn't concentrate on the building up of an organization. He doesn't concentrate on the performance of duties or the performance of some mission of moral good or of altruistic benefit to the human race. What Paul concentrates on is the message that was promised beforehand in the Scriptures.

It was revealed in the Old Testament. The message that he preaches can be found in the Old Testament. And it concerns Jesus Christ.

The focus of Christianity is Christ. The focus is not good works. The focus is not problem solving.

The focus is not giving everyone a better life. The focus is not making better circumstances. The focus is Jesus Christ.

That's the gospel. That's what God promised beforehand in the Scriptures. And that's what he reveals through his called out apostles in the pages of the New Testament Scriptures.

And we need to remember that emphasis because so often our Christianity gets away from Christ and becomes manianity, I guess, or believer-anity, where it centers on us and where we are and what our circumstances are, what our problems are, what our needs are, what our ambitions and hopes and dreams and how satisfied and fulfilled do we feel. That's not God's purpose. We will find that many of those things will take place, but they are benefits and results of focusing on Jesus Christ.

That's what Paul does here. And this is the authority that he invokes for writing this letter. He says, basically, I have been called to present to you this message.

It's the same message that God started out revealing to Israel in the Old Testament. And it's being brought to full flower and full revelation through the ministry of the apostles of whom I am one. Now, this is important because Paul is writing to a group of people, many of whom he has never met and never seen.

He has heard about their faith. He knows that they exist in Rome and he knows that many of them are Gentiles and they fall in the category of targets for his ministry because he is the apostle to Gentiles. If you're going to minister as an apostle to the Gentiles, it's a good idea to establish the reason and the right by which you do so.

What gives Paul the right to speak to these people that he's never seen? He establishes that here. He invokes the authority of his calling and his gift, and he ties his ministry to the ongoing plan of God as it unfolds, starting in the Old Testament and extending through the New Testament age. Now, he says some specific things about Jesus Christ, and this tells us the kind of gospel that he preaches.

We know from other things that Paul has said that there were lots of different gospels being preached, weren't there? There were people that said, well, Jesus Christ was a wonderful rabbi, but he's basically within the fold of Judaism, and you need to be Jewish to believe in Jesus Christ. You need to still follow the law of Moses. There were people that said that Jesus Christ wasn't really the Son of God except for a brief period and that his Son of God status was ethereal.

Some of them even preached that Jesus wasn't a real person at all, that he was just a vision, a mass hallucination, and that the truth was all otherworldly. Some people associated sin with anything having to do with the material world. Therefore, Jesus couldn't be a part of the material world, or he would be sinful.

And so he was a spirit. He was a vision. He was a concept, an idea.

There were lots of gospels by this time being preached. So Paul tells us, not only do I have the authority to speak, but here's the message that I'm bringing to you. This is the message that God began revealing in the Old Testament that he promised to the nation of Israel, and this is the message that is being confirmed by the Holy Spirit about Jesus Christ.

This is the Christ that we preach. He is our Lord. He was born of the seed of David according to the flesh.

He is a real person. He lived for 33 years on the earth in human form. And he is also declared to be the Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness by the resurrection from the dead.

One of the concepts that we tend to underestimate and underemphasize in our faith is the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Paul tells us here, and we will see this in more detail as we go through the book, that it is the resurrection that identifies Jesus Christ as the Son of God. It's the resurrection that he focuses on here.

Notice also that Paul assumes some knowledge on the part of these people. Paul does not give a capsule gospel here. He doesn't talk about the blood of Jesus Christ atoning for our sins.

He doesn't talk about the death of Jesus Christ on the cross. He says Jesus Christ is the Son of God and he was declared to be so by the spirit of holiness in power through the resurrection from the dead. So he is assuming that they know about Christ's resurrection.

That they understand what happened on the cross and that they know who the spirit of holiness is. Now this tells us something very important at the outset of this book. And this is a part of our introduction.

Paul is not writing to evangelize Gentiles in Rome. That is manifestly not his purpose. Everything that we have seen in these first four verses tells us that Paul is writing to believers.

First of all, an unbeliever isn't going to know the promises of God in the Old Testament. An unbeliever is not likely to have any concept of the authority of apostleship. Or the means by which apostles were identified.

Which these people clearly know because Paul refers to that when he identifies himself. I am called, I am marked out, I am sent to preach this good news. All of these are things that would be meaningless to unbelievers.

The issue in communicating with unbelievers is Jesus Christ. Sin, righteousness, and judgment are made clear to unbelievers by the Holy Spirit. And it is our job when we deal with unbelievers in our ambassadorship function to communicate Jesus Christ.

Because he is the answer to sin and righteousness and judgment. But that is not the tact that Paul takes as he begins this letter. He refers to things that believers understand.

He assumes that they know and believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And that he died and was buried and rose again. And he says this is the kind of gospel, this is the kind of good news that I am going to be talking to you about.

It is based on the results of Christ's work on the cross. It is based on the resurrection. It is based on the fact that Christ was declared to be the Son of God through that.

Then notice in verse 5 he says, And this brings together the thoughts that we have just expressed. Through Jesus Christ, Paul, and this is the editorial plural here. When he says we, unlike some of his other letters, he is not including Timothy or Silas or Barnabas.

This is a letter from Paul as an individual apostle. But he is talking about himself. Through him, through Jesus Christ, Paul has received grace and apostleship.

This is the office of an apostle, the authority of an apostle. And once again we have the word *ace* with a view toward, unto. This is the purpose for which these things were given.

Now this word obedience is our most often encountered word for obedience. *Akuo* is the word to hear and *hupa* means to be under. To hear under means to respond to the commands of someone who has authority.

Now let me give you a literal rendering of this from Greek. Verse 5 in Greek says, Through whom

we have received, and that's just one word. It's *lombano* in the first person plural.

And it's an heiress we received at a point in the past. Grace and apostleship. Then you have the word *ace* with a view toward, *hupa koin*, obedience.

Then we have a genitive of the word *pistos*. This is *pisteos*. And so he's saying with a view toward obedience of faith.

If you just render it in simple English. Now what kind of genitive is this? The New King James translates this, obedience to the faith. But this is obedience of faith.

The obedience belonging to faith. Obedience from the source of faith. Is closer to what Paul is getting at here.

The reason the English translates this obedience to the faith. Is that the translators here see Paul's mission as evangelism. And they see the purpose of this letter as evangelism.

But stop and think about it. How much obedience is involved in salvation? There isn't any. Not on our part.

The obedience of Christ to the death of the cross. Made salvation possible for us. But salvation comes through faith.

It doesn't come through obedience. Obedience is salvation by works. And if you try to force saving faith into this verse.

You wind up with salvation by works. And people try to explain it away. And say well they're obeying by responding to the call.

That's nonsense. The Bible never talks about saving faith as obedience. Obedience is what you do after faith.

Obedience comes from faith. If you believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. If you believe that He died on the cross.

And rescued us. And gave us a standing before God. And entered us into God's family.

That is going to motivate obedience. And that is Paul's calling. That is Paul's mission.

If you're going to have people who are obedient. From faith. Obviously they need to come to faith.

And so evangelism is going to be a part of Paul's mission. But he doesn't characterize his calling as an apostle. As being an evangelist.

His calling is to bring people to obedience. My often used illustration of this. Is the recruiting function in the military.

You think about the Navy or the Marine Corps or the Army. The mission of the training commands. Of all of those services.

Is to produce soldiers and sailors and marines. That know how to function in a military environment. Who can accomplish the mission that those services perform.

There is a recruiting element in each of the services. That identifies and signs up civilians. But that's not the mission of the service.

The Navy doesn't exist to make new sailors. The Marine Corps doesn't exist to make new marines. The Army doesn't exist simply to create new soldiers.

That is simply a step in building up a force. That accomplishes the mission that that service has. Paul's function as an apostle is to build up the body of Christ.

The obedience of faith. Obviously a part of that is going to be. Recruiting in the sense of evangelism.

But Paul never emphasizes that. He never emphasizes it to the churches that he writes to. He never emphasizes it as a part of the worthy Christian walk.

That we evangelize. He in those days assumed that people understood. That the Christian life and the Christian walk.

Started with faith and moved to obedience. And the concentration and the emphasis that he makes. Is the obedience that should come from faith.

And this is why you have so little. By way of addressing. What about those who seem to accept Christ.

And then never do anything with their life. The apostles never address this in the New Testament writings. Because their assumption is if you come to faith in Christ.

You're going to move on. Because the whole purpose in coming to Christ. Isn't just to get a ticket away from the lake of fire.

Coming to Christ means serving the Lord. Coming to Christ means growing in grace and knowledge. Coming to Christ means the obedience that springs from faith.

And that's why the New Testament scriptures. Always emphasize the Christian walk. And not evangelism.

It's assumed that when you respond to the grace of God. Under the ministry of the Holy Spirit. That's the direction you're going to move.

And that's where the apostles focus their efforts. So Paul says that he has received grace and apostleship. To bring this about.

The obedience from faith. For the sake of his name. This reflects the glory of Jesus Christ.

Not only that people accept Christ as their Savior. But that they pursue the worthy walk. That they pursue the obedience that comes from faith.

That's what glorifies the name of Jesus Christ. And this is among all the nations. It's not restricted to Israel.

Including yourselves who are called. To belong to Jesus Christ. And this is interesting.

Because this word called in verse 6. Is the same as it was in verse 1. It's kleitos. And in the same way that Paul is called. To be an apostle of Jesus Christ.

We. All believers. Are called.

To belong to Jesus Christ. Now in this. A lot of people would once again see the salvation call.

But I think that what Paul is talking about here. Is the same thing that Jesus talked about. When he talked to his disciples.

And he said. When you let your light shine before men. So that they see your good works.

And glorify your Father who is in heaven. Then you will be sons of your Father. You will be sons indeed.

You will not only be sons in name. But you will be sons indeed. When we are called to belong to Jesus Christ.

When we are called to. This is another genitive. It's like these other genitives that we've seen in these first few verses.

There's no word for belong to. And if you translate this straight out of the Greek. It says.

To you also. You yourselves. Called.

And then you have the genitive of Christ Jesus. Called to be of Jesus Christ. Called to be associated with him.

To belong to him. To be. Thought of in the same context with him.

It's just. A form of identification. A genitive.

That's why you have genitives of source. And genitives of possession. Because the genitive.

Takes one thing. And associates it closely with another. Whether by ownership.

Or source. Or. The part for the whole.

And the whole for the part. And that sort of thing. And so he says.

You have been called to be of Jesus Christ. You have been called to belong to him. To be from the source of him.

And to reflect him. Is the idea here. That is the calling.

We have this calling reflected. Many places in scripture. Peter again mentions this.

We are called. To be. Holy.

That is a Christian calling. And that is an optional choice. Not all of us.

Respond and fulfill that calling. But this is the introduction. That Paul gives.

And it accomplishes these purposes. As we have mentioned. It identifies Paul.

And establishes his authority. It invokes the authority. Of his divine commission.

It introduces his subject. Which is the good news. About Jesus Christ.

That was foretold in the Old Testament. It also gives us a preview and summary. Of what Paul wants to accomplish.

In this letter. He wants to accomplish. Obedience.

That belongs to faith. Obedience that comes from faith. Obedience that reflects faith.

He is addressing. Believers. Who have been called.

To belong to. And reflect. Jesus Christ.

And then he continues in verse 7. To all God's beloved in Rome. Who are called. Once again.

To be. Saints. And the word saints here.

Hagios. Is the root idea. And it had the idea of separation.

Of dedication. Of being set apart. For a purpose.

This is not so much. With the idea of moral holiness. Or moral uprightness or righteousness.

As it is. Dedication for a purpose. And that's the way that this word was used in the Old

Testament.

When it talked about the priests. Who were set apart. As holy for God's service.

And the holy things in the tabernacle. And later in the temple. The holy things were things that were.

Set apart and dedicated exclusively. To God's purposes and God's use. They weren't common anymore.

They weren't profane anymore. They weren't ordinary anymore. They were special and set apart.

Because they were associated with God. And that's what Paul reminds these believers of here. We have been called.

To be special. To be set apart. And to accomplish a specific purpose in God's plan.

That's the people to whom. Paul is writing. And I'm belaboring this point.

And emphasizing it for a reason. Romans is the book that we use for salvation. It's the Roman road that is taught to us.

Romans 3.23. Romans 6.23. And so forth. But this book was not designed to be. An evangelism letter.

This is a Christian walk letter. That's the category that it falls into in Paul's writings. And that's its purpose.

And we need to keep that firmly in our mind. As we approach this letter. Because when we start getting into the thick of the theology.

We need to know why the letter is being written. To whom it is being written. And what Paul's purpose is for writing it.

And his purpose is obedience of the faith. He is writing to people who are God's beloved. Who have been called to be set apart.

And to fulfill a special purpose in God's plan. That's the audience. These people are saved.

So Paul is not evangelizing them. Now I hope I've beat that into the ground enough. That I can refer back to it now.

When we get into the heavy hitting in chapter 2 and 3 and following. That we're talking to believers. That is the critical pebble that diverts the stream.

That sends the river down the whole other side of the mountain. In interpreting the book of

Romans. We have to understand that it's written to believers.

And that's going to help us solve a lot of the puzzles. That we will encounter as we go through. Paul then includes his standard greeting in verse 7. Grace to you and peace.

And he always identifies the source. In a lot of secular letters people would just say grace to you. Or peace upon you.

But in Paul's letters he always reminds people. That there is a way to have grace. And there is a way to have peace in your life.

It's not just a casual greeting anymore. He uses it as a tool to remind people. That if you really do want grace.

And you do want peace in your life. There is a source. It comes from God the Father.

And our Lord Jesus Christ. That's the introductory section. We're going to pause here and take our break.

And when we return we're going to cover...