

# The pre-eminence of Christ in the proclamation of the Gospel

Romans 1:5-7

## INTRODUCTION

*Romans 1:5–7 (NKJV) — 5 Through Him we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations for His name, 6 among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ; 7 To all who are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

*Acts 1:8 (NKJV) — 8 But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”*

*Colossians 1:15–18 (NKJV) — 15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. 16 For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. 17 And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. 18 And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.*

1. **Jesus Christ is preeminent above all things.** V18 - “That in everything he might be preeminent.”
  - a. **Why is He preeminent?** Because of what he is, the beginning and what he has accomplished, victory over death.
  - b. **How is He preeminent?** He is the source and sustainer of all things.
    - i. **Source V16** - Christ is the means and reason by which all things are created.
    - ii. **Sustainer V17** - Christ is the sustainer of all things - Christ not only initiates but also maintains, supports, and upholds all things.
  - c. **Where is He preeminent?** He is preeminent in creation and in the church.
    - i. Christ is the source of the Church and of her mission: The church does not exist if it is not because of Christ. Christ is the means and the reason of the Church and her mission.
    - ii. Christ is the sustainer of the Church and her mission.
2. **Paul not only knew about the preeminence but had experienced it.**
  - a. **In his calling: Galatians 1:13–17 (NKJV) —** 13 For you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it. 14 And I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers. 15 But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb and called me through His grace, 16 to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood, 17 nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went to Arabia, and returned again to Damascus.

- b. **In his life: Philippians 1:21–23 (NKJV)** — 21 For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. 22 But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell. 23 For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better.
  - c. **In his preaching: 1 Corinthians 2:2 (NKJV)** — 2 For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.
  - d. **In his suffering: Philippians 4:12–13 (NKJV)** — 12 I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. 13 I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.
  - e. **In his ministry: Romans 1:5 (NKJV)** — 5 Through Him we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations for His name,
3. **The preeminence of Christ over Paul's ministry teaches us about the preeminence of Christ over the ministry of the church: The proclamation of the Gospel to the nation.**

## SERMON: The pre-eminence of Christ in the proclamation of the Gospel

### 1. Christ is preeminent in the calling and equipping of the church for Gospel proclamation.

*Romans 1:5 (NKJV) — 5 Through Him we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations for His name,*

#### a. Explanation

- i. **Theology:** The church's mission is to proclaim the Gospel to the nations, bringing Christ's message to the farthest corners of the earth. To achieve this, the church must be commissioned and equipped. The commissioning or calling of the church, as well as its equipping, are from Christ. It is Christ who calls the church, and Christ who equips the church for the fulfilment of this mission.
- ii. **From the text:** "Through Him, we have received grace and apostleship."
  - 1. **The Apostle speaks about himself:** Despite the Apostle Paul's use of 'we' in his reference to having received grace and apostleship, he is not referring to another person but to himself. This is an instance of a 'plural of category,' where the Apostle uses the plural form to speak of himself. This is not the only occasion where the Apostle employs this technique, nor is he the only author in the Bible to do so. The reason we know that the Apostle is speaking about himself is due to the uniqueness of his ministry. He was the only one among the Apostles who had been called to the Gentiles.
  - 2. **The Apostle speaks about his calling and equipping:** In the text, it is evident that the Apostle speaks about his personal

calling and equipping. The apostle Paul tells us that it is through Jesus Christ that he has received grace and apostleship for the preaching of the Gospel to the nations. Jesus Christ was the source and sustainer of Apostle Paul's apostolic ministry. Initially, Paul was not interested in being a follower or servant of the Lord Jesus Christ; he was a fervent opposer. He stood against Jesus Christ and the Christians. Had it not been for the sovereign grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, which overcame Paul's rebellion, Paul would never have been called and equipped for the apostolic ministry. It was the pure grace of Jesus Christ that made him an apostle.

### 3. **But how do we know that this applies to the church?**

#### a. **Three keys in the text**

- i. **The Romans:** The Apostle tells us in verse six that the Romans are among those nations called to belong to Jesus Christ. Furthermore, in verse eight, the Apostle honours the faith of the church in Rome, stating that the faith of the Romans is known throughout the world. Clearly, when he speaks of the faith of the Romans, he does not mean that the Christian churches in other cities were amazed merely by the Romans' beliefs. Rather, it was the deeds of the Romans that were known worldwide. We understand that faith without works is dead. It is the works of faith by the Romans that were recognised globally.
  - ii. **The resurrected and ascended Christ:** The text indicates that the Apostle Paul's calling to apostleship was through Jesus Christ, but not just any Jesus Christ, but rather the victorious Jesus Christ—in other words, the resurrected and ascended Christ. It is through the ascended Christ that Paul receives grace and apostleship.
  - iii. **The gift of his calling:** Secondly, the pertinent combination of the word 'receive' with 'grace' shows the unmerited nature of his calling; in other words, his apostleship was a gift. Paul received the gift of apostleship; the ascended Jesus Christ gave him the gift of his calling.
- b. **Ephesians 4:7–12 (NKJV)** — 7 But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. 8 Therefore He says: "When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, And gave gifts to men." 9 (Now this, "He ascended"—what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth? 10 He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.) 11 And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some

evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,

- i. The ascended Jesus Christ does not only have preeminence in the calling and equipping of the apostles, but also prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers.
- ii. But someone may say I am not an apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor, or teacher. The Scripture says: “12 for the equipping of “the saints for the work of ministry”. Jesus Christ is preeminent in the calling and equipping of all saints for the work of ministry. Clearly, the purpose of the church is the edification of the body of Christ. However, the building up, maturing, and growth of the church of Christ occurs through the salvation of the lost. As these individuals are added to the church, the body of Christ grows. Therefore, all Christians have received the grace of Jesus Christ in being called to the work of ministry.”

#### **b. Application**

- i. **Christ is the source of your calling to proclaim the Gospel, not you:** It is all about Christ, not you. Your limitations and your fears are part of God’s sovereign plan for the proclamation of the Gospel. And Why does God do it that way? so that this world would be put to shame by the ways of God.
  1. **1 Corinthians 1:26–31 (NKJV)** — 26 For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. 27 But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; 28 and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, 29 that no flesh should glory in His presence. 30 But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption—31 that, as it is written, “He who glories, let him glory in the LORD.”
- ii. **Christ is the sustainer of your calling to proclaim the Gospel, not you:** We are not better gospel proclaimers because we grow in experience and our strategy improves, but because we grow in dependence upon the grace of the victorious Christ Jesus.

## **2. Christ is preeminent in how the church proclaims the Gospel to the nations.**

**Romans 1:5–7 (NKJV) — 5 Through Him we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations for His name,**

**a. Explanation:**

- i. **Theology:** Paul did not view his apostolic mission as merely making evangelistic visits to various places to convert as many people as possible. Instead, he saw his mission as the task of calling men and women to submit to the Lordship of Christ. This submission began with conversion, but the true measure of this conversion was to be seen in a lifelong journey of discipleship.
- ii. **From the text:** “for obedience to the faith among all nations” This text explains that Paul's mission as an apostle was to lead people to a kind of faith that involves obedience. "Obedience of faith" doesn't just mean believing in the gospel (the teachings of Jesus Christ) but also acting on it. It's not just about understanding and accepting the truth of the gospel; it's about living it out in one's life. So, when Paul talks about spreading faith among all nations, he means encouraging people not just to believe in the teachings of Jesus but also to live according to those teachings.
  1. What is the evidence for this?
    - a. **His intention to visit the Romans:** Romans 1:11–12 (NKJV) — 11 For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, so that you may be established—12 that is, that I may be encouraged together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me. → Romans 15:14
    - b. **His view of his work as “labourer”** - 1 Corinthians 3:5–17 (NKJV) — 5 Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers through whom you believed, as the Lord gave to each one? 6 I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. 7 So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase. 8 Now he who plants and he who waters are one, and each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor. 9 For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, you are God's building. 10 According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it. 11 For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. 12 Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, 13 each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. 14 If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. 15 If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire. 16 Do you not know that you are

the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? 17 If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are.

- c. **The example of Timothy:** 2 Timothy 4:1–5 (NKJV) — 1 I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: 2 Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. 3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; 4 and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. 5 But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.
- d. **The example of the early church: Acts 6:7 (NKJV) — 7** Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith.
- e. **The desire of the LORD: Matthew 28:18–20 (NKJV) —** 18 And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Amen.

**b. Application:**

- i. **Discipleship in the context of the local church:** Christ is preeminent in the methodology of proclaiming the Gospel to the nations, and the way He has determined in His Word for this proclamation to take place is not only through the mass distribution of the message but also through the diligent and sacrificial exercise of discipleship of those who come to faith. The establishment of the Kingdom of God and the fulfilment of the Great Commission do not occur simply with an exponential increase in the number of believers but with the establishment of local, biblical churches that intentionally and sacrificially disciple those who believe in Christ Jesus. The local church is where we disciple one another; in the context of the local church, we grow in conformity to Christ Jesus. In the context of the local church, we advance and bear fruits of righteousness for the glory of the Father through Christ Jesus. Biblical evangelism is not merely about accumulating a number of professions of faith, but ensuring that those who believe in Christ Jesus are biblically disciples for the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ.

- ii. **For the glory of Christ:** The purpose of proclaiming the Gospel to the nations is the glory of Jesus Christ. The church should not be seeking the glory of anyone else but solely and exclusively the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. When the church truly seeks the exaltation of Christ in all its actions, these actions are strengthened and blessed by the Spirit of Jesus Christ. This Spirit brings salvation among the nations, the edification of churches, and the Great Commission's fulfilment to bring the Gospel to all nations.

**CALL: Let us not waste our lives; instead, let us dedicate ourselves to the proclamation of the Gospel, with Christ as preeminent.**

1. Christ is preeminent in the proclamation of the Gospel; let's give ourselves to our LORD and his calling.
2. Christ is preeminent in the proclamation of the Gospel; let's focus less on what the world does and more on what Jesus has done already and has promised will do.