

## Salutation of the Apostle Paul

### **Romans 1:1-7**

As we begin considering the truths of this amazing treatise of faith, we immediately discover how great its message actually is. It could be argued that Romans is the masterpiece of all that wrote Paul. Although inspired by the Holy Spirit, one cannot help but hear, see, and feel the heart of Paul expressing itself in this letter to a place he longed to visit with each stroke of the pen.

In each of the fourteen epistles written by Paul, with the exception of Hebrews (which for obvious reasons to me needed none) the Apostle's salutations are beautiful and somewhat brief although to the point. But, in this letter, the Apostle uses 126 words with each one touched with the Spirit of God and the fragrance of Heaven itself.

**Verse 1** is a simple enough greeting. It introduces the human author who is none other than the Apostle Paul. I can imagine that when a letter was received by in the Church with Paul's name at its beginning, many emotions stirred in the hearts of those who were either privileged to read the letter or to listen to each word of the letter as it was read.

This verse tells us much about Paul. It begins by emphasizing the fact he was a "bondservant" of the Lord. He does not begin with the fact he was an apostle, but rather with the fact he was a slave (doulos) or servant of the Lord. Later in this book, Paul will tell us he was "sold unto sin" in **Romans 7:14**. This means when the Lord confronted him on the road to Damascus, the Lord actually found him on the auction block of sin. When the Lord called Saul to service, he found him in the slave market, bought him out of the slave market (with assurance of him never returning to the market place), and set him free.

(Just as a side note, **Exodus 21:1-6** sets forth a beautiful picture of an indentured servant, explains the attitude behind Paul's use of the word "doulos" or servant here in **verse 1**. The motivation for both was love for their master.)

Paul did what we would be wise to do after meeting the Man with the nailed pierced hands, die to self. Paul was never the same after meeting the risen Lord as recorded in **Acts 9**. From that moment forward, all that Paul was, had, and did

belonged to the Lord. He was no longer his own. He understood he had been bought with a price.

Paul continues his introduction with the fact that he had been “called to be an apostle.” Without going into detail, if one studies and compares the calling of the original twelve apostles with the calling of the apostle Paul, one will come to understand Paul was the one chosen to replace the “bishopruck” (**Acts 1:20/Psalm 109:8**) of Judas Iscariot and not Matthias. I truly believe the intentions of Peter and the others were sincere, but I sincerely believe they were premature in changing the means by which the apostles had been chosen. Originally, the Lord had chosen them and called them to Him. I believe He followed the same process when He chose a converted Pharisee to replace the one who betrayed Him.

According to the **1 Corinthians 15:8-9**, Paul knew that he had had an untimely birth. Yet he also knew he met the requirements of apostleship. The first condition for apostleship was the necessity of seeing the resurrected Lord. Paul saw Him as Saul one day as he headed for Damascus. I believe the Man with the nailed pierced hands who met Saul that day was the only man which could have gotten Saul’s attention, stopped him, and turned him. The second necessity for apostleship was that a man had to be personally chosen by the Lord Himself: Paul was, Matthias was not.

As noted by Alva McClain, when one compares **John 6:70** and **Acts 9:15** one will find almost identical wording in Jesus’ calling of the original twelve and a man by the name of Saul. All of the apostles received a personal call from the Lord.

The verse continues with a statement that Paul had been “separated unto the Gospel.” And, by the way, it is noted here to be the “gospel of God” because it originated with Him. This is a statement of fact. It states the purpose for which the Lord had called Paul. He had separated Paul from old things to new things: from the world to Himself. Paul had been separated from the dead religion of Judaism to a new life in Christ and He did so through the message of good news, that is the Gospel of God.

Just a note of application if you will: if you and I are saved we too have been separated. This means we have been set off for a specific purpose too. We have been set off from sin unto God for His service. Because we are, we are saints even though at times we are not very saintly. It is not difficult to see the pattern set

before us in this passage. If we are saved, we have been called, purchased, and separated. Our lives are not our own. We are the Lord's and what a great thing that truly is! Surely was ought to live like we know that great truth.

That message of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ of Nazareth is the "power of God." It is a power the world of Rome would come to know. It is a power that was greater than any military, political, or philosophical power known or produced by man. The Gospel not only contains the power of God, it is the power of God. It is a power in action against the fallen state of men and the assault of the god of this world to thwart the plans of Almighty God. The word gospel appears in this letter thirteen times and this is its first appearance.

**Verse 2** is a parentheses. A parentheses is a word or clause that is inserted into a sentence for the purpose of explanation which, if omitted, would leave the sentence standing complete without it. Please note it is marked off for us with brackets. In the Bible we find a parentheses may be either a phrase, a complete verse, or an entire chapter.

Although **verse 2** is a parentheses, that does nothing to diminish the message being communicated here by Paul. The message is simple but sublime and that is the gospel is as old as the Scriptures are! The gospel of the New Testament is the gospel of the Old Testament. The only difference being the manner in which it is presented. In the Old Testament it was presented in types and shadows as **Hebrews 10:1** indicates. In the New Testament it is presented clearly in reality. We find the lambs of the Old Testament were in type the "lamb of God" (**John 1:29**) of the New Testament which came to take away the sins of the world.

I have heard all my life that the Old Testament is the New Testament concealed and the New Testament is the Old Testament revealed and that statement is true. According to the very words of our Lord found in **Luke 24:25-26** as He walked and talked with the two men He had met on the road to Emmaus, His message can be found throughout the Old Testament beginning with the writings of Moses and then in all the other prophets that followed. In fact, later on that same day in **Luke 24:44** Jesus identifies the three great divisions of the Old Testament: the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms.

Without doubt, in this epistle, Paul refers to the Old Testament a number of times in order to help establish the message of the gospel of God. In fact, depending on

the source, I am told Paul and the other writes of the New Testament, quote from the Old Testament close to three hundred times. From the many sources I checked, there are obvious difference of opinion as to exactly how many quotes that are. But, the fact remains, there are many times Paul and the other writers of the New Testament were led by the Holy Spirit to reach back into the Old Testament and bring something of great importance into the New Testament to help establish the truth being communicated.

References to Christ may be seen in the Old Testament by simply doing a quick, cursive look back at the Scriptures. Some of the obvious and well known Scriptures that bear this great truth are: **Genesis 3:15, Exodus 12, Number 21, Psalm 16, Psalm 22, Isaiah 53, and Jonah 3.**

**Verse 3** continues the thought began in **verse 2**. The good news that was “promised afore by his prophets” concerning “his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.” At first glimpse, the words “his Son Jesus Christ” may not seem significant. But, when considered closely, the depth of their significance becomes blindingly obvious! How so? Well, here we are given His name, His title, His divinity, and His humanity in four words. Only God can say so much with so few words.

Please note that the word “Son” is capitalized. That action alone sets Jesus off from all other sons. It marks a relationship Jesus had with God the Father to be totally different from all other relationships men have with God the Father. Jesus is God’s only begotten or one of a kind Son. He was with God in the beginning and actually was Himself God according to **John 1:1**. And **Isaiah 6:9** tells us “For unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given.” That Son was none other than Jesus Christ Himself.

In eternity past God decided “Jesus” (meaning saviour/deliverer) would be the name of His Son which would be eternally connected with His humanity. What an amazing statement that is! How could God, who is divine, also be human? And, yet, that is exactly what His name denotes! Jesus was not only God, but He was also man...born of a virgin in the strictest sense. In this name given to His Son, God declared the purpose for which His Son was to be born. The purpose for His coming was for Him to “seek and to save that which was lost.” **Luke 19:10**

Jesus was His name, but “Christ” was His title. “The Christ” it speaks of God’s one of a kind anointed. He was the promised Messiah of the Old Testament and

the Christ or the anointed one of the New Testament. He is the Yeshua Hamashiach. There had been many boys named Jesus before and in Jesus' day, but there was only one Jesus the Christ!

By adding the word "Lord" to Jesus (the) Christ, we learn He was not only human, but He was also divine. This word speaks of both His position and person. He is the Old Testament Lord Jehovah manifest in the flesh of a baby from Nazareth who's name was Jesus the Christ.

In continuing the thought, the verse continues in educating us on how Jesus, which was God, became a man. It was through the means of the virgin birth! Although this verse does not contain a clear statement of the virgin birth, the truth of it is made. This truth may be seen in a question the Pharisees were unable to answer that Jesus set before them in **Matthew 22:41-46**. Although the Pharisee could not answer the Lord, we ought to be able to see what Jesus asked would be impossible unless He had actually been virgin born.

Please note something wonderful found here. Paul did not say Jesus had been born "the seed of David" but rather "was made of the seed of David according to the flesh." This is how our Lord got His flesh. He was of the royal seed of David. Instead of being born flesh as all other men are, Jesus Christ was "made according to the flesh" by a special creative act of God. This is an amazing statement of the virgin birth given by the apostle Paul here. It is a statement that gets far too little attention when considering the virgin birth of Christ. In some way known only by God, God broke in the normal method of regeneration and through the agency of the Holy Spirit when He brought His Son into the world by joining the divine with the womb of a virgin. And, through that process, God brought forth His one of a kind Son and robbed Him in flesh.

In fact, that is exactly what both **John 1:14** and **Galatians 4:4** says, that Jesus was "made."

Although "made of the seed of David," **verse 4** says He was "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from (out from among) the dead." How amazing the things stated here are. It is stated, that because He was of "according to the seed of David" Jesus was human, but because He was of "according to the spirit of holiness" Jesus was Divine. This

means Jesus was both God and man. He was and still remains to be both God and man. In fact, **1 Timothy 2:5** refers to Him as “the man Christ Jesus.”

It was by the resurrection that Jesus was once and for all horized (or marked out) by an undeniable sign as the Son of God. By the resurrection, Jesus forever testified to His being the eternal Son of God. It is the resurrection that proves His virgin birth whereas it is the virgin birth that enables His resurrection. When this truth is rightly understood, it gives great hope to all who have placed their faith and trust in the work Christ accomplished on the cross in dying for us and as us.

As believers, we identify ourselves with Christ in believers baptism. Baptism pictures the believer dying with Christ when He died. Being buried with Christ when He was buried. Being raised with Christ when He arose. So, within this great statement a believer finds hope. This is a declaration that one day if death takes us before the rapture takes us, we will be brought out from among the dead just like our Lord was. And, that is exactly what He said in **John 14:19** “because I live, ye shall live also.” What a message of assurance!

In **verse 5** we find “grace” used for the first time, but not the last. Paul uses this great word at least twenty times in this book. Here Paul says “we have received grace and apostleship” and continues with the words “for obedience to the faith.” There is a question of how Paul intended the word grace found here to be understood. Does he intend for us understand it as the means whereby we are saved as it is found and used in many other places? Or does it speak of the enablement God gave to Paul and the others whom He chose for the position and work of an apostle?

I believe it speaks of the latter. It is in **Ephesians 4:7-8** that Paul says “But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore, when he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive and gave gifts unto men.” Here we find referring to the enablement God gives to those He gifts with some work to do or some calling to fulfill.

Paul continues with referring to the “obedience to the faith.” May I say that obedience is very important in a believers life? Need I say we are saved by faith and not by works: but after we are saved we are to work: faithfully and consistently. In fact, saving faith actually makes you obedient to Jesus Christ.

In **Verses 6 and 7**, the apostle closes his marvelous introduction by lifting up three great things about not only the believers at Rome, but all believers in Christ. First, in **verse 6** he says: “Among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ.” The phrase “called of Jesus Christ” is an interesting phrase. In this day when hyper-Calvinism is on the rise, giving sufficient attention to this phrase would take a great deal of time for which is not the purpose of this commentary. Allow me to say, that if you have heard the call of God and are following Christ, you are one of “the called.” **John 6:37** says: “All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.” If you aren’t sure you are one of the elect, call on Him and He will save you by His grace, for His glory, and you will become one of His elect. Then you will belong to Jesus Christ.

He continues in **verse 7** to tell them they are the “beloved of God.” Not just some of them that believe, but “all” of them that believe. How wonderful that is. Finally he informs them that they are “called to be saints.” This is not presented as being optional. As believers, they have been separated or set aside for the use of the Master. They are not saints because they were saintly all the time (for they were not), but because He has chosen them and sanctified them. Please notice the words in this verse that are vitalized “*to be*” are supplied by the translation with intention of making the reading flow better. The verse actually says those who have trusted Christ as Saviour are “called saints” from the beginning of their relationship with Christ. They are not to wait until after death to have a body of men decide whether or not they have reached the state of sainthood! Christ sets all who believe into that position from the beginning of their new life in Christ.

As in his other epistles, the apostle brings together two great words: grace and peace. Paul ends this introduction by declaring the fact that peace is always preceded by the grace a believing sinner receives when they by repent of their sins and by faith receives Christ as their Saviour. And, as if receiving divine peace is not enough, Paul lets us know the source of this peace which we receive is from both “God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Thus, Paul’s one of a kind salutation closes with the promise that believers never have to be concerned whether or not they would ever lack either enough grace or peace during their earthly pilgrimage. Paul declares they will never be separated one from another and that they will always be the constant companion of the believer in Christ Jesus.

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