

Sermons through

# Romans

## Obedience to the Faith

*Romans 1:5*

*With Study Questions*

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# Obedience to the Faith

*Romans 1:5*

Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called *to be* an apostle, separated to the gospel of God <sup>2</sup> which He promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures, <sup>3</sup> concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, <sup>4</sup> and declared *to be* the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead. <sup>5</sup> Through Him we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations for His name (Romans 1:1-5).

## Introduction

Many tracts are written to present the gospel. How would present the gospel? What would the tract include? What would the message contain?

## Review

In quick review we see Paul a Bondservant – no longer a slave of sin leading to death but a slave of Christ leading to eternal life. Paul had the office of apostle – an office that is not perennial, that does not extend beyond those specific individuals, chosen by Jesus who were witnesses of the resurrected Christ.

Paul was set apart for the gospel of God promised in the Scriptures – even the Old Testament Scriptures – containing propositions upon which we trust our souls graciously deposited in His word—a message from the beginning of history – a message “**concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord,**” Christ meaning *Messiah* and Jesus meaning *Savior*. Jesus was born of the seed of David – the long awaited Messiah who would bring redemption to the world – and declared to be the Son of God according to the Spirit of holiness by the resurrection from the dead indicating that though fully human, He was also fully God and what He would accomplish on David’s throne would first and foremost be the victory over sin and death.

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

## Grace and Apostleship

Paul had received **“grace and apostleship.”** Some prefer to translate it the **“grace of apostleship”** but I prefer to take it both ways. The grace of apostleship is correct since Paul did not merit this office. Prior to his call he was **“breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord”** (Acts 9:1). He didn’t fit the requirements of a minister. There is not a reputable church in the land who would have ordained Saul of Tarsus based upon his resume’. He was an apostle by the grace of God.

But I would also (at least theologically if not exegetically) understand it as the grace necessary for the job description. How many of us would apply for employment if we read the work included:

**...in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often...five times...forty stripes minus one...three times beaten with rods...once stoned...three times shipwrecked...a night and a day in the deep...perils of waters, perils of robbers, perils of our own countrymen, perils in the city, perils in the wilderness, perils in the sea, perils among false brethren...in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness – besides the other things...a daily deep concern for all the churches (2 Corinthians 11:23-38).**

At the end of Romans Paul will ask the church to prayer for him that he **“may be delivered from those in Judea who do not believe”** (Romans 15:31). Seeking to honor and serve that which is good, right and true – seeking to honor the name of Christ can be terribly uncomfortable on a number of levels.

## Obedience to the Faith

Paul understood his mission to be that of calling **“all nations”** to the **“obedience of faith.”** This is not, generally speaking, the way we hear the

gospel presented. We see the gospel presented more as an invitation – and at a certain level that is understandable. Jesus did compare the kingdom of heaven to a wedding to which people were invited (Matthew 22:2). But it is not as if the king in that parable is indifferent toward those who **“paid no attention” (Matthew 22:5)** to the invitation. We are told (especially of those who persecuted the ones issuing the invitation) that the king was **“angry” (Matthew 22:7)**.

This is not to be understood as the king merely being hurt and temperamental for having been slighted. The wedding feast was for his son to whom all owe allegiance. All who were invited owe their very existence to the son, for it was through the son that all things were created (Colossians 1:16). The king’s son was the one who made the ultimate sacrifice to deliver men from the darkness of sin and death.

As we had mentioned last week, the king’s son is the Messiah to whom all the **“families and nations shall worship” (Psalm 22:37)**; the one to whom the **“kings” and “rulers of the earth”** are to bow (**Psalm 2:10-12**).

We invite people to church and, in a sense, the gospel is presented as an invitation. But it would be a mistake to view the kingdom of heaven as a mere social event where the host patiently awaits our RSVP, moderately apathetic toward our response. It is more like a royal decree, informing the citizens that the king has arrived and we should respond with grateful hearts and bowed knees.

Paul understood his role as an apostle to call all the nations to **“obedience to the faith.”** Some seek to interpret this as the obedience that comes from faith – that is the fruit of faith, and true faith should and does produce obedience. But prior to the daily and routine obedience produced by faith is the obedience to the faith itself. As has been said:

**...for obedience to the faith – rather, “for the obedience of faith” – that is, in order to men’s yielding themselves to the belief of God’s saving message, which is the highest of all obedience.<sup>1</sup>**

Paul was a bondservant of Christ – he gloried in this knowing that it is only when a person is a slave of Christ that they will know the true

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<sup>1</sup> Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., Fausset, A. R., Brown, D., & Brown, D. (1997). *A commentary, critical and explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments* (Ro 1:5). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

freedom from the slavery of the world and its consequential death — precisely what Jesus was teaching in the eighth chapter of John with the words **“the truth shall set you free” (John 8:32)**. Paul was a bondsman of Christ and he was calling the **“all the nations”** to follow suit. Paul was not advancing a mere religious preference but obedience to a legitimate authority.

To some this may sound more like a Christian Jihad than the polite western Jesus who courteously remains outside the boundaries and territories to which He has not been invited. And if so, then recognize that the only blood that is to be shed in this Jihad is the blood of the King’s Son. This is not an argument for pacifism or against just war or capital punishment, etc. It is a statement that the **“battle is the Lord’s” (1 Samuel 17:47** and He won it at the cross (Colossians 2:14, 15).

Let us pray the gospel be presented in such a way that men recognize that the obedience to the faith is not a call that smacks of the servile submission of a slave the joyful obedience of a child who has come to see the wisdom and grace of his heavenly king and father (John 15:15).

Resistance to the obedience to the faith may prevail in cultures where (generally because of the faithful before them) relative freedom and prosperity are common. But when men are left to the capricious whims and vacuous ethics of other men, rather than a holy God, the inevitable blight and debris of human wreckage will manifest the folly of our thinking.

Obedience to the faith means renouncing all others as Lord and trusting in Christ alone as supreme Master (Luke 14:33). Obedience to the faith means to forsake all lesser gods and trust in Jesus as our only hope for peace with our Maker (Romans 5:1). This was Paul’s mission. Calvin taught:

**We hence learn, that they perversely resist the authority of God and upset the whole of what he has ordained, who irreverently and contemptuously reject the preaching of the gospel; the design of which is to constrain us to obey God. <sup>2</sup>**

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<sup>2</sup> Calvin, J. (1998). *Calvin's Commentaries: Romans* (electronic ed.). Logos Library System; Calvin's Commentaries (Ro 1:5). Albany, OR: Ages Software.

## Name

Paul's mission was to herald the **"obedience to the faith among all the nations."** There was no territory outside the jurisdiction of this message. And Paul pursued this "for His name" that is, for the name of God. Let us be clear that the name of God is used as means by which we speak of God Himself. It is not the mere word of "handle."

A reference to the name of God is a way of saying "God." So when we read passages such as:

**But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel (Acts 9:15).**

**For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved (Romans 10:13).**

We recognize the name as referring to God. So to do things "in" His name is to do things as His ambassador (2 Corinthians 5:20). And to do things "for His name" is to do things with a heart to His glory; if there is another name deserving I would very much like to hear it.

May God give us the grace to perceive that the greatest and most intimate gifts we find deposited in our lives and souls have, at the same time, the chief end of His glory. Is this not what we read in the much recited Psalm?

**He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake (Psalm 23:3).**

## Questions for Study

1. If you were to make a tract for the gospel, what would it contain (page 2)?
2. Review the first four verses in Romans. How do they lead into verse five (page 2)?
3. Discuss “grace and apostleship.” Did Paul merit his apostleship? Explain. Why would Paul need grace while acting as an apostle (page 3)?
4. Is “obedience to the faith” the way we generally hear the gospel presented? Does this mean we’re saved by our obedience? What right does God have to call people to obedience (pages 3, 4)?
5. How is there freedom in slavery when it comes to Christ (pages 3, 4)?
6. Explain how the call to obedience to the faith is different than Jihad (page 5).
7. What are some components of obedience to the faith (page 5)?
8. Discuss the “name” of God. What does it mean? What does it mean to do things “in” His name or “for” His Name (page 6)?