

“Why Should Anyone Listen to Me?” – Paul’s introduction to the book of Romans

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Text: Romans 1:1-7 (NASB): “¹Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, ²which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures, ³concerning His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh, ⁴who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord, ⁵through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for His name’s sake, ⁶among whom you are also the called of Jesus Christ; ⁷to all who are beloved of God in Rome, called as saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

I. Brief Background of the Book of Romans

1. **Who:** Paul; trained as a Pharisee under Gamaliel; Roman citizen and called as apostle to the Gentiles (Acts 9)
2. **To Whom:** The church in Rome; both Jews and Gentiles; perhaps est. by Jewish believers from Pentecost (Acts 2:10)
3. **When:** Written ~56AD, when Nero was emperor (AD 54-68), from Corinth near the end of 3rd missionary journey
4. **Where:** Rome - Capital and most important city in the Roman empire, center of the “known” world
5. **Why:** Unlike many epistles that were written to deal with specific issues, Romans appears to be written as a comprehensive “manual of the gospel” – perhaps to provide instruction for the church in the absence of direct apostolic discipleship
6. **What:** Primary theme is the Gospel of Christ Jesus, and Christ’s redemption by grace through faith (1:16-17, 3:34)

II. Introduction to Paul’s Introduction to the book of Romans

1. The longest introduction of any of his epistles (17 verses)
2. Paul knew several in Rome (chapter 16), but had never served there (1:13) → perhaps why he wrote a longer intro
3. The introduction makes a strong case that believers should listen to the Epistle to the Romans
4. We can learn from Paul’s example in our role as ministers of the gospel – “Why should anyone listen to me?”

III. Main Points: “Why Should Anyone Listen to Me?”

1. **Because of Paul’s C_____** (1a) → Paul was a committed, true believer; he had integrity.
 - a. What does it mean to be a bondservant, a slave, a “doulos” of Christ Jesus? → Romans 6:15-23
 - Romans 6:17-18, - “having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness”
 - Salvation results in a changed life, a life of obedience: Romans 6:1, “How shall we who died to sin still live in it?”
 - If our life has not changed, there is a problem with our confession: I John 2:4, “The one who says, ‘I have come to know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.”

NOTE: Presenting ourselves as a “liar” is not a good way to get people to listen...
 - b. Application – Questions to ask ourselves:
 - Am I a true believer? Have I recognized my sin; repented; placed my faith in Christ, and confessed Him as Lord?
 - Am I a bondservant of Christ Jesus? Do I walk in integrity so that my message is consistent with my actions?
2. **Because of Paul’s C_____** (1b) – Paul was writing with authority granted him by Jesus
 - a. What is an apostle?
 - Designated by Jesus and personally trained by Him to speak for Him and guide the establishment of the church
 - Every book of the New Testament was written by an apostle, or was overseen and endorsed by an apostle
 - b. Paul’s authority came from his apostleship. Where do we derive authority for our message?
 - Authority in our words comes (only) from the authority of the Bible. (II Timothy 3:16 – “inspired by God”)
 - Our words concerning the gospel only carry authority if consistent with God’s Word – we need to weigh our words and those of others (Acts 17:11b, “examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so.” Also 2 Peter 1:20)
 - c. Application:
 - Am I consistent in presenting God’s Word accurately and faithfully – without obscuring it with personal opinions?
 - Am I examining messages received to verify they are consistent with God’s Word?
3. **Because of Paul’s C_____** (1c) – Paul was speaking the truth, the good news of God!
 - a. ALL believers are “commissioned” to share the “gospel of God”
 - Matthew 28:19-20a, “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you;”
 - b. Application
 - Am I being obedient to Jesus’ command to reach the lost, create disciples, and teach them to obey Christ’s commands?
 - Am I studying the Bible enough to be equipped to reach the lost and build up believers? (I Peter 3:15; 2 Timothy 2:15)

NOTE: Paul's message of the gospel was being delivered to two broad groups with distinctly different outlooks to the world:
(1) The Jews – who knew of Jehovah already from the Old Testament
(2) The Gentiles – Those excluded from the covenants of Israel, most of whom did not have a concept of the one true God

3a. **Why should the Jews listen to the “content” of the Gospel?** (v 2-4)

a. **Because it is the C_____ of God's promises** (v2)

- Paul was not establishing a “new religion.” The Messiah was clearly foretold in the Old Testament (“Holy Scriptures”)
- Genesis 3:15 – “seed” of Adam; Genesis 12:1-3 – Abraham – “in you all the families of the earth will be blessed;” Many more (Psalm 22; Isaiah 53; Micah 5:2)

b. **Because Jesus meets the physical C_____ of the Messiah.** (v3)

- Jesus was fully man (born in the flesh) → was a historical (real) person
- The Jews expected the Messiah (the Christ) to be a descendant of David (Isaiah 11:1, “Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse;” Jeremiah 23:5, “I will raise up for David a righteous Branch;”)
- Jesus meets the criteria for the Messiah being a descendant of David – both on his mother's side (Mary) (Luke 3:23-38) and on his stepfather's Joseph's side (Matt. 1:1-17)

3b. **Why should Everyone listen – including Gentiles?** (v 5-6)

a. **Because Jesus C_____ death!** (v4)

- Jesus is fully God – as proven by his resurrection!
- Jesus sacrifice was accepted – He fulfilled the law, brought about the reconciliation promised! I Corinthians 15:17-19

b. **Because Jesus C_____ grace on believers** (v5a)

- Note – We have received “grace,” but not apostleship. Paul received apostleship, and we received the benefit from the work of the apostles (the establishment of the church and the New Testament)
- Grace – favor we do not deserve – unique to Christianity among world religions (Ephesians 2:8-9)

c. **Because Jesus extended the Great C_____ to ALL the nations.** (v5b-6)

- Application: Am I doing my part to share the gospel with all – regardless of their background?

4. **Because of Paul's C_____** (v7-15) Paul's expression of love for the Roman saints

a. Verses 1:8-15 provide insight into several ways Paul expressed his love for the church in Rome

b. Love for one another – both our neighbors, and fellow believers – is commanded throughout scripture

- Leviticus 19:18; Matt 5:43, 19:19, 22:38; Mark 12:31-33; Luke 10:27; John 13:34, 15:17, 15:12, 13:35; Romans 12:10,13:8,10; Galatians 5:14; Philippians 2:4; I Thessalonians 4:9; James 2:8; 1 Peter 1:22, 3:8, 4:8; 1 John 4:11, 3:11, 4:7, 4:12, 3:23, 4:20; 2 John 1:5

c. Absence of love indicates a problem with our relationship with Christ (I John 3:14)

d. Application

- Do I love others – both other believers and the lost (our “neighbors”) enough to share the gospel and make disciples?
- Do I display my love through genuine concern, prayer, and actions to give credence to the gospel I present?
- Looking at verses 8-15, what are specific ways Paul expressed his love and concern for those whom he wanted to reach?

IV. Application: “Why should we want people to listen?”

Romans 1:16-17, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, “BUT THE RIGHTEOUS man SHALL LIVE BY FAITH.”

- The power is in the gospel – not in our cleverness, efforts, or skill
 - o Power to save from God's wrath deserved by our former sins (Romans 3:21-26)
 - o Power to save from slavery to sin in the present (Romans 6)
 - o Power to save from the presence of sin in the future (2 Peter 3:13, Rev. 21:1-7)
- Believers have an obligation to the lost (Romans 1:14-15) like the “watchman” of Ezekiel 33:1-9

Questions to ask ourselves:

- Am I “ashamed of the gospel” because I am not a believer?
- Am I “ashamed of the gospel” because I am ashamed of sin in my life / because I am not living a life of obedience to Christ?
- Am I “ashamed of the gospel” because I have not recognized my “calling” in the great commission?
- Am I “ashamed of the gospel” because I do not know God's truth well enough to share it with the lost or to build up believers?
- Am I “ashamed of the gospel” because I do not love others? Am I more concerned about “helping myself” than helping others?

Challenge: Examine our hearts, live for God as a workman that does not need to be ashamed. II Timothy 2:15, “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.”