

Notes for the Ones Called-Out to Meet

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Introductory Terms in Romans

by Dan Trygg

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

Romans 1:1-7

Are you ready to dig into some theology? We are going to begin a study of Paul's letter to the Romans. **This document is the closest example of an organized theological treatise that we have in the NT.** Most of the letters, written by Paul and others, were addressing specific issues in particular churches. They give us a patchwork of theological and practical subjects, not an organized presentation of theology. The book of Romans, however, is definitely less affected by such issues, and offers a more clear, reasoned and orderly presentation of what the apostle thought and taught. **Paul was attempting to introduce himself to the Roman church, because he was planning on stopping by there on his way to Spain.** He hoped to be able to minister among them, and then to be assisted by them in his journey. **He wrote from Corinth in the early spring of A.D. 58,** just before returning to Jerusalem with the offering he collected for the poor (Rom. 15:25-28; Acts 19:21). Rome was the capital city of the Roman Empire, and the seat of imperial government. The city was one of the largest in the Empire, containing an estimated 1.2 million people. The church probably was begun by converted Jews returning from Pentecost (Acts 2).

I. Paul begins by introducing himself.

(a.) **He refers to himself as a “slave of Christ”**, which means that he had given himself wholly to do the will of Christ, His Master. A slave was not as negative a concept back in NT times, as it is in 21st century America. **Over 60% of the population were slaves to someone.** A person could become a slave to satisfy a debt, as a captive of war, voluntarily, or by birth. In every case, the essence was that the slave was at the master's beck and call. **Paul saw himself as Christ's slave because he came to realize that he had incurred an incalculable debt toward God through his sin, and Jesus had died to pay his debt.** In order to benefit from this, however, Paul had to voluntarily accept Christ's payment on his behalf. In so doing, he no longer was a free man. He had been bought with a price (I Cor. 6:19,20). Therefore, his purpose in life was to serve the will of his new Master, and to bring Him honor and glory.

(b.) **He also identifies himself as “an apostle” of Christ. The word “apostle” meant “sent one”.** It referred to a representative or delegate sent in place of the master himself. There is a difference between a simple “messenger” (Gk. – “angelos”) and a “representative”. A messenger would be expected merely to deliver the message, whereas *the representative or ambassador would go forth to act and speak in the place of the master.* In Mark 3:14, Jesus appointed 12 men, from among His many followers, to spend more time with Him, so that He could send them out (Gk. -“apostellō”) to preach, to have authority over the demons, and to perform signs and wonders (Matt. 10:1,2; II Cor. 12:2). He trained them to be people who would know Him well enough to represent him adequately and accurately. Paul did not have the opportunity to know the earthly Jesus in that way, but **the risen Jesus appeared to him, called him and trained him to be an apostle** (Acts 9:15; 26:15-18; Gal. 1:1,11-12). The ability and call to be an apostle is listed as a spiritual gift (I Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:11). Paul's experience indicates how this gift can be extended beyond that first generation who knew Jesus. **Others were called apostles, beyond the original 12** (Acts 14:14; Rom. 16:7; Gal. 1:19).

(c.) **He claims to have been “set apart for the gospel of God”.** In Gal. 1:15, he states that God had set him apart for this ministry from his mother's womb. The word, “gospel”, means “good news” or “glad tidings”.

II. Regarding the “gospel” or “good message”, Paul tells us that:

(a.) **It was God's message**, the good news that pertained to Him.

(b.) **It was promised and prophesied about by OT prophets** sent from God (I Pet. 1:9-12).

(c.) **It was about God's Son** (Lk. 24:25-27,44; Acts 13:26-39; 17:2,3; Heb. 1:1,2).

III. Concerning this Son, Paul says,

(a.) **He was a physical offspring of David** (II Sam. 7:12-17; Psa. 89:36,37; Isa. 9:6; Jer. 23:5,6; 33:15-17,26).

(b.) **He was “marked off” as God's Son**

(i.) **In power** (i.e., by miracle – cf. Jn. 20:30,31; Acts 2:22; 10:38)

- (ii.) **According to the Spirit of holiness** (i.e., the Holy Spirit did it).
- (iii.) **By means of the resurrection from the dead ones.** The resurrection was the premier authenticating sign that Jesus was truly God's Son (cf. Acts 2:22-36; 17:31; 1Cor. 15:1-26).
- (c.) **He is Jesus Messiah, the Lord of us.** The word, "Christ", means "Anointed one". It was the title reserved for the King of Israel (Lk. 23:2), the Messiah (Jn. 1:41). He is to be our King, our Master, the One whom we honor, pledge our service to, and obey.

IV. Through Jesus, Paul received ("took", "laid-hold-of" – cf. Acts 1:8)

- (a.) **The grace (unique God-given ability) to be an apostle.**
- (b.) **The apostolic call or responsibility.** Note that *both* the call and the ability were free gifts from God through Jesus. Paul had done nothing to earn them. It was *God's* plan (I Cor. 12:11), not his, that he would be an apostle, or envoy of Jesus Christ, ...and God enabled him to effectively do what he was called to do (cf. II Cor. 3:5,6; Eph. 2:10). As an apostle, he preached the good news message, and did the signs and wonders that were like Jesus' own (Mk. 3:14,15; II Cor. 12:12).

V. The Purpose of Paul's Apostleship – To Bring About the Obedience of Faith

The notion of the "obedience of faith" is not a popular idea in many circles today. For many, church, Jesus and "religion" have little to do with a real change of life. Yet that is what Paul tells us was to be the outcome of his proclamation of the good news. It was to bring about obedience.

It was to result in the obedient surrender of the will to God. First, we have to recognize our *hopeless state*: ...lost in sin, dead toward God (Eph. 2:1,2), destroying our selves and heading toward a judgment of wrath, and unable to make things right between Him and us by *any* efforts on our own. **At that point, we are ready to hear the good news** that God loves us, and does not wish for anyone to perish. **He came to search us out, ...to establish a way for us to return to Him.** We hear of the incredible story of His plan to come to planet earth, to be born as one of us, and to take our place as the Sinbearer. **He willingly bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live for Him** (I Pet. 2:24). If this message grabs our hearts, **if we truly grasp and are amazed at His love and grace, hope rises up inside of us and we find ourselves wanting to give ourselves to yield to Him, and serve Him** Faith comes by hearing the message of God's love and His call upon our lives. When we respond to this message of hope with genuine faith (*trust*), then we cannot help but surrender to Him. It is the very nature of faith to yield to the One we trust.

It was to result in a life commitment of obedience to God. Not only do we yield our wills in surrender to God, **we also purpose to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus** (II Pet. 3:18), **so that we can effectively do His will in our lives.** Trusting in Jesus is more than going to church or a few religious meetings each week. It means that we are willing to give Him the rightful place in our lives as our King and Master *every* day. It means that we get serious about living for Him. **We get serious about getting to know Him and discovering His will for our lives. We apply ourselves to studying His Word,** so we can learn what He expects of us, and how He has enabled us to live for Him. **We align ourselves with other like-minded serious followers of Jesus, so that they can help us mature,** and so we can join them in the work of the King. **Together we give ourselves to discovering and fulfilling His purposes.** We, like Paul, have been designated to do some special work in the Father's plan. We must commit to train for that calling.

It was to result in the obedience of faith among the nations. This goes right back to Jesus. **He had a worldwide vision.** The message of the good news was to be spread abroad throughout the entire planet. Of those who hear, some will respond. **We are to follow up those who believe, seeing to it that they become solid, growing and obedient disciples.** Jesus commanded His eleven to "disciplize" the nations, immersing them in water as a sign of the break with their past lives and their consecration to Him, and teaching them to obey *all* that He said (Matt. 28:18-20). In Revelations 6, John writes that Jesus, the Lamb of God, had redeemed to God *people from every family, tribe, tongue, people and nation* (5:9). That was God's plan. It *will* happen. Paul took *practical steps* to make it happen. He personally traveled the entire northeastern quadrant of the Mediterranean shoreline, sharing the good news and planting churches. We, too, can participate in God's great agenda for the history of humankind. **We can either go, ourselves, ...or we can help send others to preach the good news to the lost, and make disciples among peoples everywhere.**

Finally, we are among those who are "called" or invited to join in this great work. Paul uses three very important words for us: **We are "called ones", "beloved ones" and "called-saints ones".** **There is a calling,** a plan, an invitation for us. God wishes to include us, not only in His forever family, but also in the *work* of building His Kingdom. **We are beloved by Him.** He has proven that, but it is hard to really let it sink in. The words have become so trite as to nearly lose their meaning. "God loves *me!*" **Then, He has set you apart for Himself** and His plans. "Holy" or "saint" means "set apart from common use". He already calls you "saint". Consecrate yourself to doing His will.