

## Romans 1:2-7a—The Power of the Gospel of Grace

In writing this letter to the Romans Paul reminds these Roman Christians that he is able to write with such authority because he has been commissioned by Jesus Christ as the apostle to the Gentiles, under the direction of the Holy Spirit.

As we saw last week his commission did not exclude the responsibility to be a servant or slave of Jesus Christ, in the sense that he saw his position before God as one who was purchased by the blood of Jesus Christ, and therefore one who willingly submitted to the will of his new Master and Lord.

Recognizing that he was set apart for the gospel of God Paul continues in Rom 1:2 "the gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures..."

We've touched on this before, but Paul again sets the stage for this gospel of God, in that it was not a surprise which was sprung on an unsuspecting world.

This gospel or good news was spoken of for hundreds of years before this time of Paul's writing to the Romans. And the reason that this is important is that it shows design and purpose in the plan of God to redeem a lost world.

From all of eternity God planned to send His Son Jesus Christ to die for you and me. And as His plan unfolded the Lord would reveal some of the details through His prophets in what we have today as the O.T. Scriptures.

Paul refers to these as the holy Scriptures given to the prophets. The word holy is the Greek word Hagios which means consecrated or set apart. These are God's very words set apart for the special purpose of revealing Himself to us and the plan He has to bring His people to Himself.

Luke records in Act 10:43 "All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."

When Paul wrote to Titus he said in Tit 1:1-3 "Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ for the faith of God's elect and the knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness-- a faith and knowledge resting on the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time, and at his

appointed season he brought his word to light through the preaching entrusted to me by the command of God our Savior,"

Paul says that God promised to do this. And God, being a faithful God, came through on His promise by sending His Son, who Paul speaks of in Rom1:3.... "regarding his Son, who as to his human nature was a descendant of David,"

What makes this Savior unique is that He has not only a Divine nature, being God, but a human nature as well. He was born into this world as He chose to take on human flesh. The human lineage from which He came was that of David, the former King of Israel.

People have wondered why Jesus Christ had to become a man and dwell among men. The truth of the matter is that had Jesus not come into this world, born of the flesh, we would still be condemned in our sins.

This goes back to the problem in the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve rebelled against God. Adam was our representative. The outcome of his test, if you will, would determine our eternal future.

As our representative, he chose to fail the test, knowing the outcome in advance. God said if you disobey Me you will surely die; not only a physical death, but spiritual death as well, in the sense that man would be eternally separated from his Creator.

God set the ground rules right there in the beginning. One man, Adam, must represent the entire world, yet to come into existence, and the outcome of Adam's choice must be enacted on all mankind.

In other words, God had to carry out His justice on sinful man. This was the bad news. But the good news or gospel of God, which Paul speaks of in our text, is that in God's plan to buy us back from His own just sentence of death, the Lord had to send another human representative to accomplish what the first Adam did not do, which was to obey God perfectly.

This second Adam or second representative had to be another human being upon whom this death sentence would be enacted, though He was sinless. And so, this man Jesus, would not fail like the first. Jesus Christ was the second Adam as He took on flesh. As our representative He was victorious, and as a gift to us He gives us the victory, and that victory is eternal life with Himself. But that gift can only be received by faith as we embrace Jesus as Lord and Savior.

Rom 5:16-19 "Again, the gift of God is not like the result of the one man's sin: The judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation, but the gift followed many trespasses and brought justification. For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ. Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men. For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous."

Jesus Christ clothed with humanity has become our substitute, yet without sin. 2Co 5:21 "God made him who had no sin to be sin [Or be a sin offering] for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."

But to simply be a man could not satisfy the eternal weight of the sin which has separated us from God. To go to a cross and sacrifice yourself, die as a man, and rot in the grave does nothing for anyone.

To forgive sin and the effects of sin which are death, our representative must be able to overcome sin in every way, not the least of which is victory over the grave, which is the curse of sin.

And so Paul continues in Rom 1:4 "and who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord."

In verse 3 we see the humanity of Jesus as He was born of the seed of David. In verse 4 we see the Divinity or Godhood of Jesus. This is why we have the expression that Jesus is fully man and fully God.

Only God can forgive sin. And so for Jesus to be anything less than God He would fall eternally short of having the authority to forgive us of our sin through His obedience which took Him to the cross for us.

We get a glimpse of this in Mar 2:3-12 "Some men came, bringing to [Jesus] a paralytic, carried by four of them. Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus and, after digging through it, lowered the mat the paralyzed man was lying on. When Jesus saw their faith, he said

to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven." Now some teachers of the law were sitting there, thinking to themselves, "Why does this fellow talk like that? He's blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?" {I'm sure they had Isaiah 43:25 in mind which says, "I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more.} Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that this was what they were thinking in their hearts, and he said to them, "Why are you thinking these things? Which is easier: to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up, take your mat and walk'? But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins...." He said to the paralytic, "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home." He got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them all. This amazed everyone and they praised God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this!"

Only God can forgive sins which is precisely why Jesus Christ can forgive us our sin. He is God come in the flesh. This was an awesome thing to Paul, who understood that Jesus Christ who stopped him in his tracks on the road to Damascus, was in fact the very God the Scriptures spoke of throughout the entire O.T.

But to demonstrate that Jesus was not just another martyr dying for a cause, our Lord proved His Godhood by raising from the dead with power according to the Spirit of holiness.

The crucifixion would have meant absolutely nothing had not Jesus come out of the tomb. 1Co 15:17 "And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins."

There has been debate as to how Jesus was raised from the dead. Did the Father raise up the Son of God? Well, it would seem so according to Paul in Gal 1:1 "Paul, an apostle--sent not from men nor by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead--"

Others would have us believe that it was the Holy Spirit of God who raised Christ from the dead. Again, Paul is the one quoted. Rom 8:11 "And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you."

Still others believe that Jesus raised Himself from the dead. After all Jesus tells us in Joh 10:17-18 "The reason my Father loves me

is that I lay down my life--only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father."

We also read in Joh 2:18-21 "Then the Jews demanded of him, "What miraculous sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?" Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days." The Jews replied, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?" But the temple he had spoken of was his body."

So, who raised Christ from the dead? The answer is quite simple. God. 1Co 6:14 "By his power God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us also."

The Father is God; the Son, Jesus is God; and the Holy Spirit is God. God raised Him. Don't be confused, there aren't three Gods. There is only one God, who is in three persons.

It's a mystery, so don't hurt yourselves trying to figure out that which is infinite. God is one. And with all power and authority He has brought Christ back from the dead so that we might have life.

By the way, since we're on this subject, there are those who believe that Jesus only came into existence at His birth; prior to that He didn't exist. Jesus Christ, who is God, has existed for all of eternity. He simply took on flesh in time.

Joh 1:1 "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

Joh 1:14 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth."

In Christ's resurrection we see the power of God. In this undisputed power we see that when Jesus say's He will forgive us our sin, He not only extends the invitation, He has the power to act on it.

Lots of people make promises. But when all is said and done, no one in this world is totally reliable, precisely because we are only human and our future is in the hand of God.

But Christ has all authority. And in this authority He gives grace. Grace is simply that which God gives to us which none of us

deserve because we have rebelled against our Lord. Our salvation is the result of God's grace. And even the gifts we have as believers in Jesus Christ are gifts of grace.

Rom 1:5 "Through him and for his name's sake, we received grace and apostleship to call people from among all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith."

Paul understood that His salvation was only because of God's grace. He didn't deserve it. But he also understood that his appointment from God to be an apostle was because of God's grace. He didn't deserve that either.

You and I may deserve nothing from God, but in His grace He has given us everything. And grace, being a gift, is a gift which is not to be put on a shelf to collect dust.

The gift we have in Christ is to be used by the power of His Holy Spirit Who enables us to utilize the gift in us. We as believers have the gift of eternal life and the gifts of grace, which include the spiritual gifts God has given each one of His children, so that we might encourage one another and build each other up in Christ, so that we may be effective servants of our Lord and Master.

But the grace of God is never separated from His command to us to obey and then to walk in that obedience by faith.

Notice again what verse 5 says.... "Through him and for his name's sake, we received grace and apostleship to call people from among all the Gentiles **TO THE OBEDIENCE THAT COMES FROM FAITH.**"

All men are commanded to obey God. God's call of obedience goes out to the world, 'Repent of your sins and turn to My Son by faith for the forgiveness of your sins and life eternal.' This was the call that Paul extended to the Gentiles.

Men are to obey that call. But men choose to rebel, just like Adam and Eve. And so much of the world does not obey. But of those who obey the call to repent and believe by faith, obedience does not come to an end for us.

Obedience is inferred from the fact that we have a new Lord, the Creator of heaven and earth, who desires we walk according to His will, not ours. And so for Paul his obedience to Jesus Christ didn't end with him believing Christ, he continued his obedience by being the apostle Christ called him to be. But his obedience wasn't

characterized by him kicking and screaming like a child who wants nothing to do with cooperating with his parents.

Because he understood that Christ first loved him, his desire was to love Christ through obedience. Whatever the Lord wanted of Paul he gladly did what Christ wanted of him. But he did it in the grace and power of the Spirit by faith.

Even Jesus says in Mat 7:21 "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven."

What Jesus is stating here in this text, is that simply saying that you have believed is much different than actually believing in your Lord and Savior, which is characterized by a life of loving obedience to the Lord.

A person whose actions are out of accord with what he says he has believed, must come to grips with the situation. If they are simply saying Lord, Lord and yet do not do the will the Father who is in heaven, they must seriously consider whether they are of the household of faith.

Paul says in Phi 2:12-13 "Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed--not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence--continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose."

What he's not saying there is that we can work out our salvation by our good works. What he is saying is, that in fear and trembling, which is reverence for God, we consider what a great gift we have in Christ, and to know that outside of Him we are eternally lost.

Therefore, let us testify to the world that we do have the Spirit of God in us and walk in obedience to which our Lord has called us. And in the sense that we choose not to walk according to His will, let us fear and tremble that we are grieving the Holy Spirit.

And if we have no desire to walk obediently after Christ then let us fear and tremble that we do not know Him who has called us to Himself, and fear that we may be lost, and tremble to the extent that we would repent and believe and obey our Lord and Savior by trusting Him alone for salvation.

Paul isn't saying that we, as believers, are to walk in fear and trembling of God, wondering if He's going to squash us like bugs if

we mess up. We have not been given a spirit of fear or of timidity, but according to 2Ti 1:7 "a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline."

But if the power and love and self-discipline are non-existent, so that a person does not have a desire to walk obediently after Christ by faith, then that person must be fearful that they do not belong to God. That kind of fear is healthy. Because it's that fear which causes us to flee to the God who forgives us by His grace and enables us to love Him and serve Him.

But, I believe that Paul is also saying it is good to conduct a self-check to see if we as believers are walking obediently after our Lord, and if not then we must repent and return to the grace which we have in Christ, keeping this one thing in mind .

Rom 1:6 "And you also are among those who are called to belong to Jesus Christ."

What a privilege, to be called by God. What Paul does here is to remind the Roman Christians that what God has done for him he has done for them. The word "called", which is used in verse one, is the exact same word he uses here in verse 6.

Rom 1:1 "Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, CALLED to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God--..."

Rom 1:6 "And you also are among those who are CALLED to belong to Jesus Christ."

We have a tendency to elevate someone like the apostle Paul to the point where we can't relate to his relationship with Christ. The fact of the matter is, that you and I have received the same calling from God as did Paul.

We may not have the same gifts and responsibilities, but we have the same God who has given us the same commission and call which is to be His witness wherever we are. We are "the called" of Jesus Christ, and we should never forget that. In fact, Paul prayed for the Ephesian church so that they would never forget the great salvation they had.

He said in Eph 1:18 "I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has CALLED you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints,<sup>19</sup> and his incomparably great power for us who believe...."

Paul speaks of this calling to Timothy in 2Ti 1:8-10 "So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God, who has saved us and CALLED us to a holy life--not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel."

When God called us to Himself, He had great plans for us and still does. But He desires we obey Him, as to this calling, with loving hearts, not kicking and screaming like we sometimes do.

What should help us to want us to love our Lord Jesus in a way that shows our obedience to Him is what Paul shares in Rom 1:7 "To all in Rome who are LOVED BY GOD and CALLED to be saints: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ."

The KJV and the NAS uses the phrase "beloved of God". The idea here is that God has loved us dearly, unconditionally. Paul says to the Romans and to us, "you have all been dearly loved by God and He has called you to be His saints."

The word saint here is the same word in the Greek, which we saw in verse 2, when Paul spoke of the Holy Scriptures. The word holy and the word saint are both Hagios in the Greek.

We have been called for a purpose. That purpose is to be holy as unto the Lord. Now, aside from the moral implications, which we must not ignore, the word also means consecrated, set apart for a special work.

We are to be consecrated in the sense that we understand that our lives, which were purchased by Christ, are to be set aside for a holy purpose, a consecrated work for our God.

God doesn't set anything aside for a holy purpose unless He actually desires to use it for a special purpose. And yet, we often go through life just being mediocre about our attitude towards this calling from God.

We are His saints, His consecrated and holy ones, called to Himself and beloved by God. What a great God we have. Do we see Him as great and worthy, or do we see Him as a God of convenience whom we call upon only when things get rough?

Never take Him for granted. He never takes us for granted. He continually loves us, and calls us to Himself, with the express purpose of using us as vessels which are to be consecrated for His will and His good pleasure.

I've shared this verse with you on several occasions. I'll end with it. It's not intended to puff us up. But it is designed to put our life with God into perspective, and encourage us to rejoice that God has graciously bestowed His love on us for the high calling of being His ambassador in this world.

1Pe 2:9 "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light."

Declare Him with gratitude in your hearts, and with the understanding that it is only by God's grace that we are who we are, and that we have so great a salvation in Jesus Christ. May our obedience be motivated by our love for Him, knowing that He first loved us. And may our obedience be shown as we rely on His Spirit who enables to walk after His will, according to His word, for His glory.