

Romans

Bible Study

Paul's Mission and Purpose

Romans 1:1—4

As we are being introduced into the 13 books penned by Paul, he first asserts his authority with the claim of being an apostle. The previous lesson showed why he was as qualified as the 12 Disciples to be called an apostle. God gave him this title, not man. As we continue in the first few verses of Romans 1, Paul introduces what he will be teaching and preaching, and to whom he is writing.

A servant

Before stating that he is an apostle, he affirms that he is a servant of Jesus Christ. This particular word, as used in the New Testament, is often understood to be a bond-servant. This refers to a person who has given their life over to another in servitude. This is what Paul means when he calls himself a servant of Jesus Christ (Titus 1:1; Galatians 1:10). In the same way, Timothy (Philippians 1:1) and Epaphras (Ephesians 4:12) have called themselves servants (bond-servants).

In Romans 6:15—20, Paul uses the term to show that we can make ourselves bond-servants of sin or of righteousness. This is done at our discretion for Paul says that we are slaves to whatever we yield ourselves to (verse 16). Please understand that Paul is saying we were once slaves to sin but became slaves to righteousness at the point we became saved. He is not talking about wavering in our Christian walk. Verse 18 makes that clear by saying that since we have been freed from sin that we have now become slaves to righteousness. Since we are now slaves to righteousness (positionally), we now need to live a holy and sanctified life in accordance to our position in Christ (Verse 19).

The point is, a bond-servant chooses that position. When Paul calls himself a bond-servant, it is because he decided to live for Christ. However, from God's point of view, we are sons, not bond-servants.

Galatians 4:4—7 ⁴but when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, ⁵to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. ⁶And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. ⁷Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

Let's contrast that with Israel. Unlike members of the Body of Christ, Israel is called a servant by God (Leviticus 25:55; Isaiah 41:8; 44:1, 21; Jeremiah 46:27; Ezekiel 28:25). Individuals are also called servants by God including Moses (Joshua 1:2; Revelation 15:3), King David (2 Samuel 3:18; 7:8; 1 Kings 11:38) and even King Nebuchadnezzar (Jeremiah 43:10).

Notice the distinction between God calling Moses a servant and Paul calling himself a servant. Also note that Israel is called a servant but not the Body of Christ. When God says, "Well done, my good and faithful servant" (Matthew 25:21, 23) He is not speaking to us. Many people are waiting for the Lord to say that to them, however, this is actually going to be said to those who are faithful within Israel as they are awarded authority over cities in the Millennial Kingdom (Luke 19:17, 19).

To summarize, we put ourselves in the position of bond-servant by submitting ourselves to Him, just as Jesus Christ did to the Father when He humbled Himself and took on the form of a servant (Philippians 2:7—8). God never calls us His servants, instead, we are given an elevated position because we are in the Body of Christ. We are called sons (Romans 8:14; Galatians 4:6), the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19) and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ (Romans 8:17; Galatians 4:7).

Separated unto the Gospel

Paul was commissioned with a special mission, to carry the Gospel of the Grace of God to the Gentiles. He was actually set apart from his mother's womb (Galatians 1:15) for this special purpose. That means that if Paul (Saul) was 35 years old at the time of his conversion, that he was set apart only a few years after Jesus was born. While Jesus was ministering to Israel and preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom, God was

planning on calling Paul into service within a few short years. This shows how God had planned to begin the Church, the Body of Christ before the creation of the world (Ephesians 1:4).

The term “Gospel of God” is a generic term simply referring to the good news of God. According to Romans, Paul preaches the Gospel of God, then from Acts 20:24 Paul is seen to be preaching the Gospel of the Grace of God, and finally in 1 Corinthians 9:18, Paul is preaching the Gospel of Christ. Paul describes the specifics of the gospel he was preaching in 1 Corinthians 15:1—4. These are all descriptors of the exact same gospel that was given to him directly from Jesus Christ, and in contrast to the message given to the 12 Disciples by Jesus. He is introducing himself as the apostle, appointed by God to announce and pronounce this new gospel and new program as revealed to him by Jesus Christ.

Peter also refers to the Gospel of God (1 Peter 4:17), but his gospel was the good news of the Kingdom. He is not actively preaching this gospel at this time, but he speaks of the Tribulation, when God will judge and purify Israel and the Gospel of the Kingdom will once again be preached (Matthew 24:14).

Promised by the Prophets

Paul then claims this good news was promised in the past by God’s prophets as stated in Scripture. A quick reading seems to indicate that this Gospel of Grace was part of prophecy, and therefore it could not be part of the Mystery that Paul speaks of. Most understand that Paul was preaching the same thing as Peter and the Disciples, or at least a progression in the Gospel of the Kingdom. The problem with thinking they were preaching the same gospel, but with changes, is that any change makes for a new gospel. Paul makes that clear by stating if anyone teaches something different than what he was teaching, they are to be accursed (Galatians 1:6—9). By comparing what Peter and Paul preached, we find differences. For instance, Peter preached a baptism of repentance including water baptism while Paul didn’t include baptism in his teaching (Acts 2:37—38; Matthew 28:19; 1 Corinthians 1:17; 15:1—4). Any change to what Peter was preaching would be a new gospel.

So, what gospel was Paul preaching that was in accordance with the prophets? Verses 3—6 explain that Paul had the coming of Jesus Christ in mind. The prophets foretold that God would send Israel a Savior, and we find out that this Savior to Israel was also sent to the whole world. Jesus Christ’s death, burial and resurrection is as important for the preaching of the Kingdom as it is for the preaching of the Gospel of Grace. The promise in verse 2 is about of the coming of Jesus Christ. That is the good news (gospel) of God.

This good news of God, that He would send a Savior, is a universal truth for all generations, and is a central truth to the Gospel of Grace which was taught by Paul and defined in 1 Corinthians 15:1—4. Here Paul preaches salvation through believing in the Person of Jesus Christ and His work on the cross. This is how we become justified by faith apart from the works of the Law (Romans 3:28). This information was all contained in the Mystery doctrine, which was kept secret until revealed to the Apostle Paul (Romans 16:25—26; Ephesians 3:2—3). How could this Gospel of the Grace of God be preached or revealed in the Old Testament if it were a Mystery? How could Paul say we are no longer under Law (Romans 6:15), and that there is only one baptism (Ephesians 4:5) unless there had been some major changes in how God is dealing with man? These changes were revealed through the person of Paul, not Peter.

This new gospel that Paul preached, as spoken of in Romans 1:1—4, is the same gospel Paul preached right before his death. Just as he refers to Jesus Christ as the seed of David in Romans, he does the same thing in 2 Timothy 2:8. Referencing Jesus Christ’s lineage does not mean he was preaching the same gospel that Peter was preaching. However, those who teach that the church began at the end of Acts use verses like this to show the Gospel of the Kingdom was being preached as Romans was written. To be consistent, they should also teach that the Gospel of the Kingdom was also being preached at the end of Paul’s life.

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