

Romans 1:1–7 Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God—² which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures—³ concerning his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who was a descendant of David according to the flesh⁴ and was appointed to be the powerful Son of God according to the Spirit of holiness by the resurrection of the dead.⁵ Through him we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the Gentiles,⁶ including you who are also called by Jesus Christ.⁷ To all who are in Rome, loved by God, called as saints. Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

What if...the entire population of the world became suddenly infected with a deadly pathogen—the kill rate? 100% of the people who contract it die from it. And what if you had the cure—not a vaccine, not a therapy—but a pill that would cure it for 100% of the people who freely received the remedy?

Turns out, that there is no virus that is remotely as detrimental and deadly as what the human race faces—and has faced since our beginning.

Last week we discovered that Romans addresses our greatest human need—we are dead in our sins. From Adam to Christ death reigned through sin. Now, in Christ Jesus, grace reigns in the life of the believer. God's grace frees me from sin's penalty (death; relational exile; spiritual and physical death) and frees us from living under its power.

Paul begins this letter with a statement about his calling in the Gospel.

So he opens this letter by introducing himself to the reader...

1. The Apostle (Rom 1:1)

1:1a “Paul, a **servant of Christ Jesus...**” Acts 9:1-6 This word **servant** in this context does not mean “slave” it means an honored representative. There are only three people in the OT who are referred to with title “The Servant of Yahweh” or “The LORD’s Servant.” Moses, David, and the Messiah in Isaiah 61 (See the “Servant of Yahweh” passages of Isaiah 42:1–9; 49:1–13; 50:4–11; 52:13–53:12). The title “servant of Christ,” while not on par with the OT title does convey honor, distinguishment equivalent to Joshua (Judg 2:8) and the Prophets (Amos 3:7; Zech 1:6).

1:1b “... called as an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God”

This designation “**apostle**” appears in all of Paul’s letters, except the earliest ones 1, 2 Thess. The idea of “calling” is a technical term for Paul rooted in the OT...

Isaiah 41:8-9 But you, Israel, my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, descendant of Abraham, my friend— ⁹ I brought you from the ends of the earth and called you from its farthest corners. I said to you: You are my servant; I have chosen you.

Gal 1:15 “But when God, who from my mother’s womb set me apart and called me by his grace, was pleased ¹⁶ **to reveal his Son in me, so that I could preach him among the Gentiles.**”

Paul is called to, and set apart for apostleship—the global proclamation of God’s gospel to the nations.

Paul is an apostle: The word “**apostle**” had two senses in Paul’s day, both of which are reflected in the NT.

Qualifications: Any alleged Apostle who served in a preeminent sense would need to meet the following criteria:

- (1) They had to be one of Jesus’ original 12 **who witnessed his earthly ministry from his Baptism to his resurrection** (Acts 1).
- (2) If they were not one of the 12, then they had to have **seen Christ visibly, bodily risen from the dead** within the lifetime of the living 12 Apostles. Paul tells us in 1 Cor 15:1-7 that this is a narrow group of people. **A little over 500 people saw Jesus bodily raised, and Paul states that he was the last person to have ever seen Jesus that way. Paul also calls them the 12 himself not included.**
- (3) Able to perform signs, wonders, and miracles infallibly. 2 Cor 12:12 Paul states, “The signs of an apostle were performed with unflinching endurance among you—signs, wonders, and miracles.
- (4) generic apostles—one who is set apart and commissioned to deliver a message as an emissary or an ambassador.

Mission: Rom 1:5-6 “Through him we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the **obedience of faith** for the sake of his name among all the Gentiles including you who are also called by Jesus Christ.” **The apostle’s work is a calling placed on them by God, to preach the Gospel of God which brings about the obedient response of faith—faith is trusting reception.**

Rom 10:14 How can people call on one they’ve not heard...As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!” ¹⁶ **But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?”**

¹⁷ So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.”

What is their message?

2. The Scriptures (Rom 1:2) “...the gospel of God which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures.”

God promised the gospel through the prophets in the OT.

Folks, in an effort to obey Eph 4:3 to “**make every effort** to maintain the bond of unity” I typically do not harp or even mention other ministries from the pulpit here, unless I feel like that person’s message has the potential to do real harm.

I want to mention a position taken by Andy Stanley, a pastor of a large church in Atlanta, GA. Now let me say: Andy is a brother in the Lord whose heart and life are totally committed to reaching the unchurched for Christ. His ministry there has led many to faith and baptism. But on this issue, his position is just wrong-headed. **Essentially what he has repeatedly claimed is that preachers need to “unhitch” or essentially disentangle the message of the Gospel** (which he takes to mean the historical resurrection of Jesus) from the Bible because:

(1) The Bible isn’t credible to secular and unreached people.

(2) Your youth and children will grow up and be confronted by secularists who talk them out of their faith by challenging the credibility of the Bible.

(3) Once their secular professors, and friends demonstrate that the Bible is not credible, your poor little ill-equipped church kids will lose their faith.

(4) So stop trying to defend the indefensible. Don’t preach “faith in the Bible” because the Christian faith is not based on the Bible but on the historical event of the Resurrection. Because all of Christianity, and the Bible itself, owes its emergence and existence to this one event—the historical death and resurrection of Jesus.

But, this idea that we can “unhitch” or detach the gospel from the Bible is nonsense. So let me bring just some brotherly, gentle correction to that notion...

- How about instead of creating worship services that feel like a rock-and-roll worship show, and sermons as self-help talks—how about we structure our worship for the high praises and exaltation of a glorious God, and preach the hard things of the Gospel?
- How about instead of being ashamed of the Bible, why don’t we teach them right doctrine, and how to defend the Scripture—and that it *is defensible*? To be ready to give an answer to anyone who asks them the reason for their hope.
- **I agree that many youth and kids are losing their faith, swallowed up in a secular culture—but the real problem is not that we have tied their faith to the Bible—the problem is exactly the opposite, we have not done it enough.**

The Biblical authors (and Jesus) knew nothing of a Gospel that is not promised, prophesied, and anticipated in the Scriptures.

Luke 24:44 He told them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” He is there in his resurrected body and his first instinct is to ground that revelation in Moses the Prophets and the Psalms. Jesus spends the better part of two months after his resurrection to show the disciples everything written about himself in books of Moses, the Prophetic literature, and the Psalms. Jesus’s life, death, and resurrection were all foretold in OT in multiple ways.

1 Cor 15:3 “For I passed on to you as most important what I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.”

Heb. 1:1-4 Long ago God spoke to our ancestors **by the prophets at different times and in different ways.**² In these last days, he has spoken to us by his Son. God has appointed him heir of all things and made the universe through him.³ The Son is the radiance (effulgence; out raying; raying forth) of God’s glory and the exact expression of his nature, sustaining all things by his powerful word.

Now, this is a marvelous passage about Jesus—but all of it is the culmination of God speaking a message—first through Israel’s ancestors and prophets, finalized in the Son—recorded in the NT.

Again, Paul begins this magisterial work “...the gospel of God which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures.”

3. The King v. Rom 1:3 “**concerning** his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who was a descendant of David according to the flesh ⁴ and was appointed to be the powerful **Son of God** according to the Spirit of holiness by the resurrection of the dead.”

God’s Son: There are two senses in which the Biblical authors use the phrase, “God’s Son”

- **A Title of Preeminence:** God’s divine Son-king over the nations (Ps 2; Isa. 11:1, 10; Jer 23:5–6; 30:9; 33:14–18; Ezek 34:23–24; 37:24–25). In the ancient near east false gods of surrounding nations usually had offspring to rule in their place on earth. Julius Caesar was declared a god after his death, and his Son Augustus held the self-designation as “the son of god.” In this case Jesus is the Son of David, meaning he inherits the promises David for an everlasting Dynasty to sit on God’s throne, and the promise to inherit all the nations. ***I want to show you how David’s promise of an everlasting throne and land develop in the OT.***

2 Sam 7:10-16 “I will designate a place for my people Israel and plant them, so that they may live there and not be disturbed again...The Lord declares to you: The Lord himself will make a house for you. ¹² When your time comes and you rest with your ancestors, I will raise up after you **your descendant**, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. ¹³ He is the one who will build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. ¹⁴ I will be his father, and he will be my son. When he does wrong, I will discipline him with a rod of men and blows from mortals. ¹⁵ But my faithful love will never leave him as it did when I removed it from Saul, whom I removed from before you. ¹⁶ Your house and kingdom will endure before me forever, and your throne will be established forever.”

This passage establishes essentially two things:

(1) A **land** promise for David. God tells him that he will establish them in a “place” and plant them there so that they will never be disturbed.

(2) A **line** promise—David’s “son” will inherit the Kingdom and reign over it forever. God says “I will be his father and he my son.”

Ps 2 “Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth take their stand, and the rulers conspire together against the Lord and his Anointed One...I will declare the Lord’s decree. He said to me, “**You are my Son; today I have become your Father**. ⁸ Ask of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance and the ends of the earth your possession.”

Ps 89:3-4 “You have said, ‘I have made a covenant with my chosen one; I have sworn to David my servant: ⁴ I will establish your offspring forever, and build your throne for all generations...I have found David, my servant; I have exalted one chosen from the people...I will set his hand on the sea...I will make him the highest of the kings of the earth.’”

Whereas the original promise given to David was for an everlasting dynasty and rest from the many border wars of the surrounding nations, Psalm 2 blows out the parameters of that promise to include all nations as the Messiah’s inheritance—it envisions not merely a **dynasty** but a **definite Son** who will rule over the world.

The NT repeatedly uses Ps 2; Ps 89 as promises regarding Jesus

Mark 12:35–37 (Matt 1:1; 9:27; 21:9; Mark 11:10; Acts 4:25; 13:34; 2 Tim 2:8; Rev 22:16) While Jesus was teaching in the temple, he asked, “How can the scribes say that the Messiah is the son of David? ³⁶ David himself says by the Holy Spirit: The Lord declared to my Lord, ‘Sit at my right hand until I put your enemies under your feet.’ ³⁷ David himself calls him ‘Lord.’ How, then, can he be his son?” And the large crowd was listening to him with delight.

He is begotten, meaning—born into the world. So in this sense the title “Son of God” is a title of earthly co-regency. God’s Son-king is his viceregent who inherits the nations.

This is best expressed in the titles “Christ” and “Lord.” These titles were associated with the Jewish Messiah (Christ), and the Roman title “Lord” which is Caesar’s equivalent. Jesus is the *Christos* and the *Kurios*—Anointed Messiah and Lord of all. In case there be any question as to what’s he’s talking about, he says, **“who was a descendant of David according to the flesh.”**

Jesus is exalted as God’s King to David’s eternal and heavenly throne.

Acts 5:31 “God **exalted** this man to his right hand as ruler and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.” God has exalted Christ as ruler and Savior—he is now the world’s rightful King who saves sinners from their sins.

At present, there is still rebellion in his realm resulting in a resistance to his sovereign reign of grace.

Heb 2:8 “For in subjecting everything to him, he left nothing that is not subject to him. As it is, we do not yet see everything subjected to him.”

We look forward to a time when the kingdoms of the earth will be handed over by Christ to the Father, ending the age of the tyranny of wicked and godless men and their kingdoms.

1 Cor 15:24 “Then comes the end, when he hands over the **kingdom** to God the Father, when he abolishes all rule and all authority and power.”

Firstly, and foremostly, the title “God’s Son” refers to his preeminent position as God’s earthly viceregent who reigns victorious and has been exalted in resurrection to the right hand of God as ruler and Savior. **Again**, Rom 1:3 “**concerning** his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who was a descendant of David according to the flesh ⁴ and was appointed to be the powerful Son of God according to the Spirit of holiness by the resurrection of the dead.”

- **A Title of Preexistence:** “God the Son” who was incarnate in Jesus of Nazareth. So the incarnation, or the enfleshing of God’s Son-King, we learn that there is an added dimension—it turns out that God’s exalted Son is also God the Son.

John 1:1 “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was with God in the beginning. ³ All things were created through him, and apart from him not one thing was created that has been created...¹⁴ The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. We observed his glory, the glory as the one and only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth...¹⁸ No one has ever seen God. The one and only Son, who is himself God and is at the Father’s side—he has revealed him.

The passage that brings both concepts together as God’s preeminent Son, the firstborn from among the dead in resurrection, and the one who is by nature God the Son.

Col 1:15-20 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. ¹⁶ For everything was created by him, in heaven and on earth, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities— all things have been created through him and for him. ¹⁷ He is before all things, and by him all things hold together. ¹⁸ He is also the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to **have first place** in everything. ¹⁹ For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, ²⁰ and through him to reconcile everything to himself, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

Rom 1:4 “Jesus Christ...**was appointed to be the powerful Son of God** according to the Spirit of holiness by the resurrection of the dead.” It is his resurrection that is the coronation of the Son of God in power.

Recap:

1. Paul was called and set apart as an apostle—to proclaim the Gospel of God which concerns his Son.
2. It is the Gospel foretold and anticipated in Jewish Scriptures—a promise fulfilled.
3. A descendant of David now has the preeminent title God’s Son who rules over all, the preexistent Son who was born to rule—and to seek and save that which was lost.

Rom 1:6-7 To all who are in Rome, loved by God, called as saints.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.