

This is what we’ve looked at together so far. Paul has identified himself, his authority (God), and his life-purpose (the proclamation of the Gospel). He’s started expanding on what he means when he says the words “*Gospel of God.*” It’s ancient (1:2), speaks of God the eternal Son Who is the Father’s appointed King over all (1:3), which is declared loudly by His resurrection through the power of the Holy Spirit. That’s a lot to have said in the first 4 verses of a letter! So we don’t lose sight of the purpose of the letter, let’s remember together: **Paul wrote his letter to the Romans to unify the local church for global mission through the right understanding and application of the Gospel.** Now Paul addresses those to whom the letter is written, and we begin to see what this “*Gospel of God*” looks like when it impacts lives.

## The Great Commission (1:5)

1:5...*through Whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for His name’s sake...*

### Through Christ

- “...*through Whom*” is the first phrase in Paul’s letter to the Romans describing Christ’s work as the “*one mediator...between God and men*” (1 Timothy 2:5). All that we receive of God, from our salvation to blessings to Gospel work, come from the Father (Ephesians 1:3; James 1:17) through the Son by the Holy Spirit (John 16:15).

### Grace That Works

- Through God’s Son Paul “*received grace and apostleship to bring about...*” Through Christ Paul received grace for a purpose! It wasn’t just to get him out of hell. It wasn’t a free pass to live however he wanted.<sup>1</sup> He was saved by God’s grace in Jesus Christ for God’s purpose.

- Oh, how grace has been cheapened by our desires to live however we want!
- Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945) deserves our attention on this subject: “Cheap grace is the deadly enemy of our Church. We are fighting today for costly grace...cheap grace means the justification of sin without the justification of the sinner. Grace alone does everything, they say, and so everything can remain as it was before...the world goes on in the same old way...let the Christian live like the rest of the world, let him model himself on the world’s standards in every sphere of life, and not presumptuously aspire to live a different life under grace from his old life under sin...instead of following Christ, let the Christian enjoy the consolations of his grace! This is what we mean by cheap grace, the grace which amounts to the justification of sin without the justification of the repentant sinner who departs from sin and from whom sin departs. Cheap grace is not the kind of forgiveness of sin which frees us from the toils of sin. Cheap grace is the grace we bestow on ourselves. Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline...cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ...costly grace is the treasure hidden in the field; for the sake of it a man will gladly go and sell all that he has...it is the kingly rule of Christ, for whose sake a man will pluck out the eye which causes him to stumble; it is the call of Jesus Christ at which the disciple leaves his nets and follows Him...such grace is *costly* because it calls us to follow, and it is *grace* because it calls us to follow *Jesus Christ*. It is costly because it costs a man his life, and it is grace because it gives a man the only true life. It is costly because it condemns sin, and grace because it justifies the sinner. Above all, it is *costly* because it cost God the life of His Son...above all, it is *grace* because God did not reckon His Son

<sup>1</sup> Paul, who apparently is falsely accused of teaching this false-grace libertinism, deals with it after the rhetorical questions in Romans 3:8; 6:1.

too dear a price to pay for our life, but delivered Him up for us. Costly grace is the Incarnation of God.”<sup>2</sup>

- God freely gives saving grace to those who are believing in His Son. Through this saving grace He continues to work through us. His purpose is ultimately conformity “to the image of His Son” (Romans 8:29).<sup>3</sup> The grace by which we are saved through faith in Jesus Christ is the same grace by which God works through our lives to accomplish His purposes in this world.

### Obedience of Faith

- “...the faith which the apostleship was intended to promote was not an evanescent act of emotion but the commitment of wholehearted devotion to Christ and to the truth of the gospel.”<sup>4</sup>
- This obedience-producing faith is also described in Romans 6:16; 15:18; 16:26.

### A Global Gospel

- The Father has, through His Son, given “grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among” whom? My NASB says “Gentiles” (non-Jews), along with the NET, NIV, and NLT. Most translations, however, render this “nations” (including

---

<sup>2</sup> *The Cost of Discipleship*, quoted from the first few pages of the work. Sorry for the long quote, but he says it so well!

<sup>3</sup> READ Ephesians 2:8-10. We often quote verses 8 and 9 in thinking about salvation, but stop before verse 10, which gives us the completion of our salvation. The God Who saves us has, from eternity past, planned works for us to accomplish in His grace. For a specific example, consider Christian giving: the Macedonians were not perfect examples of this in 2 Corinthians 8-9 because of anything inherently good in them, but because of the grace of God working through them to give beyond their means to help other believers (see 2 Corinthians 8:1,6,7,9,19; 9:8,14).

<sup>4</sup> John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1959), 14.

ESV, HCSB, KJV, NCV, and NKJV). The Greek word is *ἔθνος* (we get the English cognate “ethnic” or “ethnicity” from this word). When we hear the word “nation,” we think of boundaries, government, patriotism, and geopolitics.<sup>5</sup> Is that what the word *ἔθνος* is meant to communicate?

- The main way I try to determine the meaning of a word is not from a Greek (or Hebrew) dictionary. Instead, I ask: is there a parallel word or phrase near this word that explains it?
  - The high priest Caiaphas, unwittingly prophesying, says of Jesus, “*it is expedient for you that one man die for the people, and that the whole nation not perish*” (John 11:50). In this passage, “*the people*” is set in parallel to “*the whole nation* [*ἔθνος*].” He is not speaking of the state, but the people-group.
  - “...*is God the God of Jews only? Is He not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also*” (Romans 3:29; see also 9:24). The people-group “*Jews*” is set in parallel to the people-group “*Gentiles*” (*ἔθνος*), or non-Jews.
  - “...*You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation* [*ἔθνος*]” (Revelation 5:9). The categories “*tribe and tongue and*

---

<sup>5</sup> How we understand this word has serious impact on our interpretation of certain passages of Scripture. Is the judgment described in Matthew 25:31-46 a judgment of nations as a whole (I’ve heard it called “national judgment”), or is Jesus telling us that peoples from every ethnicity will be at the judgment?

*people*” is paralleled with “*nation*.”  
Εθνος, then, is not a political entity,  
but a people-group.

- Rather than understanding εθνος as “nation” in the sense of political state, we should understand εθνος to mean people-group.<sup>6</sup>
- God is not a racist. He does not play favorites based on skin color or language or ethnicity. Revelation 5:9 tells us that the Lamb shed His blood to purchase souls from out of all races. Any kind of racism in the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ is false doctrine.<sup>7</sup>

### For Christ’s Name

- The purpose of the Gospel is the lifting up of the name of Jesus above all things. When I read about all that Paul endured “*for His name’s sake*” (see 2 Corinthians 11:23-27 for a brief list), I’m astounded by how high a priority I place on getting my way or making sure I’m comfortable. God’s main goal through Paul’s conversion was the lifting up of Jesus’ name, no matter the cost. READ Acts 9:15,16.

---

<sup>6</sup> This also results in a misunderstanding of the redemptive history described in the Bible. Under the Mosaic, or “old,” covenant, God worked through a single people-group (the Jews) who were organized into a political state (Israel) with God-given civil code and government. This covenant has passed away with the coming of the new covenant in Christ (Hebrews 8:13). Rather than working through a single people-group or nation, God is now gathering His people from out of all people-groups wherever they are. The new covenant is not like the old covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-34).

<sup>7</sup> When Peter segregates himself from non-Jews in the fellowship of the Galatian churches, Paul says that he was “*not straightforward about the truth of the Gospel*” (Galatians 2:14). Racism is Gospel-denying, and denies the redeeming power of the blood of Christ to save people from out of all people-groups, regardless of how vile and godless they are.

- This is good for us. Our greatest joy would not come from us getting everything we ever wanted, being the center of the universe, or being the ultimate purpose of God’s plan in the Gospel. We’re not the final goal. Our greatest ultimate joy comes when the universe is as it should be – with Christ as the center of all and the goal of everything.<sup>8</sup>

### Christian Self-Identity (1:6,7a)

1:6...among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ; 1:7a to all who are beloved of God in Rome, called as saints...

#### Fruit of the Global Gospel

- “...among whom.” The Church in Rome was the fruit of a Gospel mission to the nations. So are we. We are passionate for global missions because that how God has spread His Church through the generations to the ends of the earth, even to where we are now!

#### Called of Jesus Christ

- This is the second time the verb “*called*” occurs (see 1:1).

#### Beloved of God First, Roman Citizen Second

---

<sup>8</sup> READ Philippians 3:21-24. How can death – the loss of everything in this life – be “*gain*”? Think about all you enjoy and love in this life (family, fun, food, beauty, laughter, etc.). What’s on the other side of the scale that outweighs everything in this life? Being “*with Christ*.” While here, Paul lives for Christ by pouring himself out for “*the sacrifice and service of [the Philippians’] faith*” (2:17). But in death (leaving behind everything this world is and has) he actually gets to be with Christ in glory. Being where Christ is center of all things (Revelation 5:6) outweighs anything in this world. In this world we struggle against desires to gain in relationships, possessions, pleasures, comforts, power, authority, control, security, etc. – and we are never happier for it. In that world, Christ is the center of all, and it is an infinitely-growing, eternally-enduring joy, peace, love, rest, and fullness.

- Though Paul will address specific concerns of Jews and non-Jews throughout this letter, his greeting reminds us of his goal: unity. All who are in Christ, regardless of their race/ethnicity, “*are beloved of God...called as saints.*” There is no room for racism in Christ.

### Called as Holy Ones

- Paul parallels “*beloved of God*” and “*called as saints*” here. That same parallel occurs in a few other places. In 2 Thessalonians 2:13, Paul calls the church “*brethren beloved of the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification [being made holy] by the Spirit and faith in the truth.*” READ also Colossians 2:13.
- This is the third time the verb “*called*” occurs (see 1:1,6). The same God who “*called*” Paul “*as an apostle*” (1:1), and by the preaching of the Gospel made the Roman Church “*the called of Jesus Christ*” (1:6), is the same God Who made His “*beloved...in Rome*” to be “*called as saints*” (1:7).
- What does this title, “*saints,*” mean? It means “*holy ones.*”<sup>9</sup> The same “*Spirit of holiness*” Who powerfully raised Jesus from the dead (1:4) is gifted to all believers in Jesus Christ (John 7:39). He is the “*Spirit of holiness.*” This means His work in and through you will be holy. He is the same One Who inspired the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16,17). He uses His “*holy Scriptures*” (Romans 1:2) to make you more holy and guide you through Scripture’s commands to do holy works.<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup> “Holy” in Greek is *αγιος*, while “saints” is *αγιοι*. If they look the same to you, it’s because they are. This title for God’s people occurs 68 times in the Bible. Guess how many times the word “Christian” is used? Three times (Acts 11:26; 26:28; 1 Peter 4:16). You’re saved unto holiness, Church!

<sup>10</sup> The Holy Spirit, Whose purpose is to conform you to Christ-like holiness according to the commandments of holy Scripture, will never

- Holiness is not merely an Old Testament idea:
  - READ 1 Peter 1:13-16. Notice that Peter is quoting Leviticus 11:44,45; 19:2; 20:26; 21:8 (the New Testament is built on the authority of the Old Testament, both having been inspired by an unchanging God!). READ 1 Peter 2:9. What kind of “*nation*” are we called to be?
  - READ Ephesians 1:3,4. The Father’s eternal choosing of us in Christ was so that we would be what before Him? Oh, how many times I’ve heard believers make unscriptural decisions based on the statement that “God wants me to be happy.” He chose you before the foundation of the world for holiness first, beloved!

### A Prayer of Benediction (1:7b)

1:7b *Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

#### Remember That Grace Works

#### Peace Comes at a Cost

- The biblical concept of “*peace*” cannot be understood apart from the presupposition that man in his sin is separate from the God of peace. To pray “*peace*” over the believers in Rome is to remind them that this is only a reality because they have been reconciled to God in Jesus Christ.

#### Both Father and Son, or Nothing

- There is no such thing as “generic god.” God is known in His Son and as Father of His Son, or not known at all. Merely “believing in God” is not enough. READ Matthew 11:27//Luke 10:22; John 14:6; 1 John 5:10-12. Do you have the Father and Son?

---

lead you to do anything unholy, that is, in violation of the Word He inspired.