

I. Romans in Biblical Perspective
The Gospel of God
“Who? What? Whom? Where? When? Why?”
Romans 1:1–7
Dr. Harry L. Reeder III
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Let’s start by looking at Romans 1 and this is the Word of God, inspired, inerrant, infallible and sufficient. Romans 1:1–7 says [1] *Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be 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 descended from David according to the flesh [4] and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, [5] through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of His name among all the nations, [6] including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ, [7] To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints:*

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

Now Romans 16:1–2 & 23 which says [1] *I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant of the church at Cenchreae, [2] that you may welcome her in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints, and help her in whatever she may need from you, for she has been a patron of many and of myself as well.*

[23] *Gaius, who is host to me and to the whole church, greets you. Erastus, the city treasurer, and our brother Quartus, greet you.*

The grass withers, the flower fades, the Word of God abides forever and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

God has finally allowed me to work through an expository series of the book of Romans, identified with the phrase that Paul uses on this book – the Gospel of God. In baseball career I played first base, third base and catcher and those positions have a common denominator which is they require very little foot speed. Yet I had the opportunity for a little while to pitch. I’ll never forget the time I was called for the first time that I was going to be the starting pitcher and two things hit me – I was unbelievably excited and trembling with intimidation. The reason I was excited was due to how important of an opportunity it was. The reason I was intimidated was because I was fully aware of my inadequacies and incompetency for such a task and that’s exactly the way I feel with doing this series. There is not another book I would choose to preach to you in this day and time than Romans.

I believe Romans is the magnum opus that the Apostle Paul wrote of his 13 epistles. It wasn’t the first one he wrote but there is a reason. After the Gospels – Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, after Acts – the history of the Gospels, the very first of the epistles for teaching us about Christianity is Romans in the canon of Scripture. There is a reason why it has such a place of prominence. I consider the 66 books of the Bible like the Himalayan Mountains with peak after peak of glorious majesty but Mount Everest for me, is the book of Romans. It is incomparable and unbelievable as it expounds the Gospel of God. It is the manifesto of the Gospel of God. It is life changing in every respect when we address it and address it properly.

Martin Lloyd Jones preached on Romans and he preached for 17 years on it. I’m not going to do that and I can’t imagine doing that. On the other hand, it deserves a thorough treatment. I don’t think the objective is to get done with Romans but I think the objective is for

Romans to get done with us. I also don't believe I need to approach Romans like a sprint. I think a marathon would be more appropriate. When I was 40 years old, I would run mainly because it was the most inexpensive way to get some exercise and then decided I needed a goal so I decided I would run a marathon. I learned a lot doing this and there are some consequences to it for I've had two knee surgeries since then. When I finished, I did get a towel with a seal on it and the time – 4 hours and 18 minutes. One of the keys in distant running is called negative splits. In other words, for each mile you run the next one is supposed to be faster than the previous one. So when you are running a marathon (26.2 miles) the fastest mile ought to be the last mile and logically that would mean the first mile is the slowest mile. So, I just got you prepared for this series.

Our slowest mile in this series will be Romans 1:1–7 so that we make sure we have the context. The good news is that we will get faster. When I ran the marathon that was not the case for me for my fastest mile was my first mile and my slowest mile was my last mile. My last mile was so slow that the EMT and the EMV rode by me five times on that last mile. The EMT was a guy I went to school with the first time he rode by me he said 'Ike, what are you doing here?' I said 'I've asked myself that question for the last 26 miles.' When he rode by again he asked if I was okay and I said 'I'm okay.' Then I remember looking at the side of the EMV and the logo on the side of the vehicle was an EKG graph that went up and down and then flat-lined. I began to wonder if that was prophecy. The fifth time he came by he said 'Are you sure you're okay?' I said 'I'm fine Bill.' He said 'You don't look fine.' So they followed me in just make sure but we won't do this series that way for we will pick up speed as we go along.

Yet it's absolutely crucial that we take a moment in this opening paragraph of Romans 1 to see what we need to see. We need to see who is writing this, what his burden is, what he is writing, where is he writing this, when does he write it, to whom is he writing it to and why is he writing it. I'm not really excited about our current forms of communication, like texting and emails for I kind of long for the days of letters and Romans is a letter but this letter from the first century takes what I think is one of the few assets of emails and texts. I believe emails and texts are an asset in this sense; the first thing you see when receiving an email or text is who wrote it and that always affects how you read it. Paul puts himself at the beginning to let us know he wrote and that affects how we read it, how we approach it and how focused you are.

The Holy Spirit inspired over 40 plus human authors, prophets and apostles, who wrote the Word of God and He didn't make them robots but He worked through them as He had sovereignly framed them, fashioned them and developed them. So each author writes with their own personality, upbringing and background that comes through them. Paul writes 13 epistles for us and as you read his writings there is something that becomes Pauline and the Pauline-isms, where you know something about him. So in this study I just want to take a brief time to look at who he is, where he is writing from and when he sends this and then we'll come back to answer the other questions in the next study.

So who is writing the book of Romans? We know Paul is writing this. Even the liberals have to affirm the fact that this is a Pauline letter. The authorship is not challenged but what does it mean that Paul wrote this letter? This is his distillation of the manifesto of the Gospel of God. There are three things he tells you about himself in the text. In Romans 1:1, the first thing Paul tells us is that he is a servant of Christ Jesus. The word for servant here is the Greek word *doulos*, although whenever *doulos* is used in the Bible it's not always translated the same way. There are three words used to translate the word *doulos* – bondservant, servant, slave. Sometimes it's translated bondservant because the context means they aren't simply slaves by

birth or conquest but they are slaves by their own commitment, maybe they are paying off a debt or have been liberated by a master, but they in love enslave themselves back to the master.

Interestingly, in the Roman Empire the only people you knew who were not slaves were Roman citizens. Paul was a Roman citizen but he calls himself a slave, not of Caesar but of Christ Jesus. When Paul is leading up to Him as the Savior he refers to Him as Jesus the Christ and after the cross, resurrection and ascension he flips it to Christ Jesus, the One who has won the victory as the Messiah. Paul is telling us he was the slave to sin but now out of the love of Christ he has been set free and is now His slave because Paul belongs to Him. Approximately 60 percent of the Roman Empire were enslaved but they were not all slaves who worked in the fields or domestic slaves. Some slaves were doctors, lawyers or teachers. They had multiple occupations they could be in.

The second thing Paul tells us is that he is called to be an Apostle. The word called is an important word used here because this word is also referring to you – the called ones. Romans 8:28 says [28] *And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are **called** according to His purpose. [29] For those whom He foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. [30] And those whom He predestined He also **called**, and those whom He **called** He also justified, and those whom He justified He also glorified.* We are the called ones of the Lord, but then when you're called you have callings – vocational responsibilities before the Lord.

I have been called externally by evangelism where people shared the Gospel with me. Then I was called internally by the Holy Spirit who gave me eyes to see and ears to hear. Now I am a son of the living God and a slave to Christ. I not only rejoice in my sonship but also in my slaveship to Him. Now this Christ whom I serve out of love because He loves me has given me callings. I've been called to be a husband, father, pastor of Briarwood, a citizen of the US, etc. Before I was a Christian I was all those things but once I became a Christian I saw them as divine callings and not just occupations.

We have a service of ordination that follows the sacred Biblical act of installing leaders in our church, but in a real sense I agree with John Calvin and Martin Luther, where we ought to ordain you as a husband, a father, as an owner of a business or in your employment as an employee. As Christians we are to do our work heartily as unto the Lord (Col. 3:23) and these are divine callings in your life. When you become a Christian it totally changes the way you see it.

Paul's calling wasn't just a calling like you and me but as an Apostle. He is part of the foundation of the church. The church is built upon the foundation of the Prophets and the Apostles – the Old Testament and the New Testament – all pointing to Jesus Christ who is the Cornerstone.

Thirdly, Paul tells us his life has been set apart for the Gospel of God. Not only did the Gospel of God bring him life and what it means to live, Paul now says that he lives for the sake of the Gospel. In everything Paul does the Gospel is the foundation, the formation and the motivation of his life. It should be the same for us. Why do we go to work? We are going for the sake of the Gospel. We are Gospel dads, Gospel moms, Gospel citizens, Gospel workers, etc. The Gospel of God should be my foundation, formation and motivation in my entire life. I am set apart for *the Gospel of God* – I love that phrase. What is the Gospel of God? In the next study I will give you the seven things that Paul tells us of what the Gospel of God is.

I will tell you now that it's the Gospel of God – we serve God – One God in Three Persons. The Gospel is not simply about Jesus. It is the Gospel of God. It is the love of God

the Father and the love of God the Son and the power of the Holy Spirit that gives you grace and peace. It is a Trinitarian Gospel and Paul tells us what that is in its essence, how to understand it and what its implications are in our lives. So that is how Paul presents himself but we know a lot more about Apostle Paul because five different times in the Bible Paul gives his testimony in part or whole. When they are put altogether you begin to get a fuller picture of Paul.

I'm going to give you a picture here of Paul and at another time please go check out what I'm giving you. Paul's testimony is recorded in Acts, Galatians and other passages but here is what he says about himself. One, is that his name becomes Paul as an Apostle to the Gentiles for he takes a Gentile name. That wasn't his original name. His original name was Saul. We don't know the place of his birth but his childhood was in Asia Minor in a very important city of a Roman colony called Tarsus. He lived in the middle of a Jewish community and was active in the synagogue. We know he was a Hebrew of the Hebrews. He was a Jew and of the tribe of Benjamin. King Saul was also from the tribe of Benjamin. Paul ended up with one of the most famous guy's name – Saul. After the research I've done I'm under the conviction that Paul lived in Tarsus as a child up to the age of 13. Age 13 would be the normal age they would be sent away for education.

Where was Paul educated? He was educated in Jerusalem. Paul went to the school of Gamaliel and that's where it was located. He studied the law of the Lord under Gamaliel and became a "lawyer and teacher" of that law. That's why Scripture would later say Paul was a Pharisee of the Pharisees. He became a part of the Sanhedrin and mentored in that context. I believe he was there from age 13 to 30 undergoing his education formally and informally. I believe he was in Jerusalem while Jesus lived on this earth and I think Paul would have known about Jesus coming into the Temple when He came to the Temple on the occasions of His public ministry. This is speculation on my part due to the time period that it might have been. Why 30? It was then he became a delegate/emissary, a formal servant of the Sanhedrin and arrest warrants and death warrants for Christians were then put in Saul's hand and he was to destroy churches, wherever he could find them. This would not happen until you were 30 years of age.

Saul/Paul also had relatives in Jerusalem. So he probably moved there and stay with an uncle or aunt because we know he had a cousin there that helped saved his life later. He is there at the martyrdom of Stephen holding the cloaks as the Sanhedrin is in charge of his execution. Then he goes out with those warrants throughout all the churches in the area. Then what happens? On the road to Damascus he gets converted. Then he is sent to Damascus to a street called Straight. It is there he meets up with Ananias and it's confirmed that Paul is now a servant of Christ Jesus. He is saved by grace and called to be an Apostle. It is there he is told he will be taking the Gospel to the Jews and the Gentiles and that he will be put in front of governors, kings and those in authority.

From there Paul will go back to Jerusalem to spend time with the Apostles. From there he goes out into the wilderness and taught for three years by the risen Jesus directly where he gets his seminary education. Then he is called to be the associate pastor in Antioch where the Christians were first called Christians under his ministry of discipleship with Barnabas. Then he will do the first missionary journey with Barnabas. When he gets back he goes to the general assembly in Jerusalem and then sent out on a second missionary journey. He comes back and reports to the church at Antioch. Paul spends three years in Ephesus and 18 months in Corinth.

He will then go back to Ephesus and then back to Corinth for another three months and it is from Corinth at the sea port of Cenchrea that he writes the letter. He puts this letter in the hands of the female patron of the church at Corinth whose name is Pheobe and she will take the letter to Rome. He is staying at the house of Gaius. He is being supported by a city treasurer.

When I take people to Athens I take them to place where Erastus' name is engraved on a stone which is right where the church of Corinth used to meet. I know the month of when this happened but I'm not sure of the year. The month is March due to when certain feasts are taking place, the feast of the Passover. The year is either 57 or 58 A.D. Acts 20:2-3 is where this is happening.

After this Paul will go back to Jerusalem and he will be arrested there. Then he will be put in prison at Caesarea by the Sea for an extended period of time. He could have been set free earlier but he had appealed to Rome. He wanted to get to Rome and he says this 12 times in the first chapter. The Lord opens up a way for him to get to Rome through free prison ministry from Caesarea by the Sea to Rome. He goes to Rome for his first Roman imprisonment. He is there for two years in prison. Then he is set free and goes on a fourth missionary journey. We don't know where he goes but we do know while he is on this journey he writes I Timothy and Titus. Then he is arrested by Nero. This will end in his death, ten years after writing the book of Romans. He'll die in approximately 67 A.D.

So right now he is on the third missionary journey writing the book of Romans. He has just finished three months at Corinth. So where does this lead us to in a moment like this? Now that we know who he is, where he was and when he wrote it, we will now look at what this is telling us. Here is the takeaway that tells us what we know now.

Paul, the Holy Spirit inspired author, of the book of Romans, had a singular identity in life that resulted in a multi-faceted, intentional life. He is a servant of Christ Jesus who called him to be an Apostle. He is set apart for Gospel of God. Do you get the God-centered identity in his life? Paul was not only a Roman citizen, he was a Jew, a lawyer and he was well educated, but none of them are his identity. Was Paul a legalist who thought he could be saved by his works? Yes, but he didn't call himself a legalist Christian or a liberated Christian for he called himself 'Christian.' He says 'I am in Christ and Christ is in me.' He will take a whole chapter to tell us about this in Romans 6. He has a single identity – a slave servant of Christ, an Apostle called by Christ.

This Paul who never likes to talk about himself and is self-effacing, bold but humble. In Romans 1 he says 12 things – I thank the Lord always for you, I thank the Lord for my salvation, I long to see you as God is my witness and he even takes an oath on this, I pray to succeed in coming to you, I sought to come to you repeatedly, I desire to impart to you a spiritual gift, I do not want you to be unaware, I often intended to come to you, I am eager to come to you, I'm not ashamed of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We see that the one identity Paul has is that Christ Jesus is his life and that gives him multi-faceted intentionality.

He is an intentional evangelist. He wants to get to Rome to evangelize Jew and Gentile. Paul says in Romans 1:16-17 *[16] For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. [17] For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith."* He is relentless and unstoppable. Now that Christ is his and his is Christ's, he loves everything that Christ loves and Christ loved His church and gave Himself for it. The Apostle Paul would never have thought when it came to gathering with God's people that he would show up if it works in his schedule. No, he was an intentional churchman for he long to be with God's people. I can almost imagine the throne room of heaven saying 'here's Paul again asking to get to Rome.' Paul would say repeatedly how he longed to be there with them.

He was also an intentional stewardship. What does it mean to be a steward? It means to be found faithful. Paul wants to be found faithful to the Gospel of God to the Great Commission, to the Great Commandment and to Jesus Christ as his life. Paul did not come to Jesus for Jesus

to help him out with his difficulties in life, for he came to Jesus as his life. That is Paul's identity. I was talking with someone recently and they said 'What if someone comes to the Lord out of a life of immorality or homosexuality?' I said 'Praise the Lord,' So would they be a gay Christian? They won't be saying that for long, not if I have the privilege to disciple them. Our identity is never our sins whether they were prior to our conversion or the entangling ones we deal with after conversion. Our identity is Christ. It is Christ in you, the Hope of glory. You are in Christ and Christ is in you and that's our singular identity. I have no other one.

Let me put it this way; I am not an American Christian. I am a Christian American. On five different occasions Paul spoke on his Roman citizenship but that was not his identity. His identity was that he was a citizen of the Kingdom of God. Christ is my King. Christ is my life. Remember the adjective controls the noun. I am a Christian husband. I am a Christian father and grandfather. I am a Christian pastor. My relationship with Christ is not the add-on in my identities of life, my work, my politics or my nationality or my sport's teams. Those are not my identities.

I am called to be a Christian. For me to live is Christ. Christ is my life and my life is Christ's and to live is for Christ. To die is gain (Philippians 1:21). That is what the Bible is telling us with the Gospel of God. Here is a question that I have asked myself. If I go to your family, friends, teammates, classmates that know you and ask them 'what is your identity?' This is a big deal in today's society. We are in a world that says with the arrogance of autonomy that you can identify with what you want to, but the Christian says 'no I can't, no I won't and no I don't want to for my identity is Christ – I am in Him and He is in me. I am right with Him because of Him and He is right within me because He loves me. My life is Christ's.' Now that is what deals with all of the stewardship of life.

It is being a Christian that tells me how to be a husband, a father, a pastor, etc. I go to Christ for everything. My life is not my own. I have been crucified with Christ, it is no longer I who live but Christ that lives in me (Galatians 2:20). That is my identity at this point in my life and until believers begin to live like that the church will continue to be just another piece of the furniture and will be impotent without any impact of salt and light. Yet when Christians get disciplined in the church when Christ is their life, their life is for Christ, hid in Christ and their life exists for Christ and as that happens everything changes – marriages, families, relationships, etc. Likely the changes won't happen overnight but everything begins to change and gets changed to the glory of God, not to us.

Jesus is not the additive to help me get through the jangled edges of life for the jangled edges of life are sin and the consequences of sin. The answer is Jesus. Jesus doesn't save me to make sense of those jangled edges, Jesus saves me so that I am His and He is mine. That is what makes senses and that is what leads us into life. That is also why my heart is bound up in this book of Romans, for you and me. I don't simply want to get done with Romans or Romans to get done with me, I want the Gospel of God as distilled and expounded in the book of Romans to do something to me and in me. And I want to do it for you. I want Him to do it for you.

There was a reason I did the series on the Apostles' Creed. In this day and age with all the chaos, polarization, identity this and identity that, I wanted you to understand the essentials of the faith. When someone asks you what the Gospel is you can quote this Creed;

*I believe in God the Father Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth;*

*I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,*

*suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended into hell.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and will come again to judge the living and the dead.*

*I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body
and the life everlasting. Amen.*

Then you can sit down with that person, have lunch and walk through this with them.

He is my Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer and He invites you to know Him. Now I want to go to Romans that lays out for us the Gospel of God as the opening salvo of teaching in the New Testament, after the Gospels and the book of Acts. I want us all to know it because it brings us to a singular identity that effects all of our callings in life so that we become intentional evangelists, churchmen and stewardship of all of life's resources, roles and relationships. It is transforming.

There was an astounding man of amazing abilities. His life was being destroyed – all of his intellect and everything he had that was extraordinary. It was being destroyed through the dissipation of immorality and ungodliness. He had a mother back home that was praying for him in Milan, Italy. As she prayed for him, he came to the end of himself and finally as he was walking around in despair contemplating suicide, he heard some kids playing a game as a phrase was being repeated in the game – *Tolle lege* which translated from Latin is *take up and read*. He goes home and gets his mother's Bible. He takes it up to read and opens to Romans. He reads Romans 1:16 which says *[16] For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek*. His life is transformed and the greatest intellect in Christianity is cut loose for us. His name was St. Augustine.

I love the book of Romans. Augustine began to provide educational initiatives that hundreds of years later a man was in one of those schools and was in despair because he couldn't have peace with God. The man that mentored him told him to teach the book of Romans and read what Augustine said. He did that and when he read Romans 1:16 but then read Romans 1:17 which says *[17] For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith."* Then he went to Romans 5:1 which says *[1] Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ*. In that school, Martin Luther was set free and the Reformation ignited.

What Luther taught made its way to another Augustinian school to another brilliant scholar and as he read what Luther wrote, he read Romans 8:1 which says *[1] There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus*. He called it his sudden conversion and his name was John Calvin. Praise God for Romans. Not many years later he will write the first six editions of the greatest works of systematic theology for us known as Calvin's Institutes.

What Calvin wrote will later be taught in a small group Bible study and one of those attending was struggling with how he could be born again. He went to Christ's Church College at Oxford University. In this Bible study Romans 10:13 is read which says *[13] For "everyone*

who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” This man called on the Lord and was saved and his name was John Wesley. Then comes the igniting of the Great Awakening that gave birth to our nation.

Then the Great Awakening hits Wales and there is something called the Presbyterian Methodist Church – boy that’s a combination. The greatest preacher in the 20th century is saved as the legacy of the Great Awakening. His name was Martin Lloyd Jones. The last 17 years of his life he preached Romans. Biographer Ian Murray says you can’t know Martin Lloyd Jones unless you know the book of Romans.

Paul starts out by saying here is the exposition of the Gospel of God and when we get to Romans 16 Paul will say ‘my gospel is the Gospel of God – your Gospel in Christ your life.’ Everything changes. Let’s pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the moments we could be together in Your Word. Thank You Jesus for Your patience and kindness to us and the love that You have shown to us. Holy Spirit if You are speaking to someone who is reading this today may they hear the Good News that God the Father has loved them and gave the Son of God who has loved them and gave Himself for them on the cross and may they hear that God the Holy Spirit has loved them to bring them to this moment that they may see, hear, trust and obey and give their life to Jesus as Lord and Savior. Father, for Your people, we so easily let the world identify us with the things of the world. Father, give us our identity in Christ. We’re in Christ and Christ is in us and now all of life belongs to Him, I pray this in Jesus’ Name, Amen.

Power Point

Who?

- A Servant of Christ Jesus
- Called to be an Apostle
- Set apart for the Gospel of God

Where?

When?

Life Takeaway

Paul, the Holy Spirit inspired author of the Book of Romans, had a singular identity in life that resulted in a multifaceted intentional life.

- *Intentional evangelist*
- *Intentional churchman*
- *Intentional stewardship*