

Romans

Paul's Introduction

October 12, 2014

I. Paul's introduction to Romans

- A. Romans 1:1-7 . . . Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as 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 born of a descendant of David according to the flesh, [4] who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord, [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, [6] among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ; [7] to all who are beloved of God in Rome, called as saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
- B. Prayer

II. Paul's introduction to Romans

- A. Romans 1:1 . . . Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God,
 - 1. In introducing himself, Paul begins by stating he is a servant of Jesus Christ. In other words, in spite of his status as an apostleship, he makes it clear that his first position in relationship to Jesus Christ is that of a servant.
 - 2. This position of being a servant of God and of our Lord Jesus Christ has a long history in the scriptures. It is not unique to Paul.
 - a. In the OT, God referred to Abraham, Moses, Joshua, David, Isaiah, and the coming Messiah as His servants.
 - b. In the NT, Paul, James (1:1), Peter (2 Peter 1:1), and Jude (1:1) identify themselves as servants of God and Jesus Christ.
 - c. When the disciples asked Jesus to increase their faith, He said that after they had done all that was commanded of them, they were to think of themselves as unworthy slaves, for they had done only that which they ought to have done (Luke 17:10). And though this is not Jesus' complete answer, it shows He expected His disciples to identify themselves as servants.
 - d. My point here is that from Abraham to the disciples, there is a pattern of God's people being identified as God's servants regardless of their position or type of service. For example:

- (1) Abraham, Moses, Joshua, David, and Isaiah were God's chosen leaders and prophets in raising up, establishing, and disciplining Israel.
 - (2) The Messiah is of course the Son of God.
 - (3) James and Jude were brothers of Jesus. Peter was one of Jesus' three closest disciples. Paul was and is a highly respected Apostle who wrote much of the NT.
 - (4) Yet in spite of their calling to important tasks, they were identified as servants of God.
3. Now I don't want to make too much of this, but I don't want to make too little of it either – especially in today's Christian culture where it is common to discourage self-abasement and encourage self-exaltation by focusing on the exalted positions we have in Christ.
4. Now I am not saying these exalted positions are untrue, nor am I suggesting we should not acknowledge them or receive them as gifts from God.
 - a. However, holding a humble perspective of the lowliness of our condition and position before the almighty and perfectly holy God has a profound effect on how we think about God, speak about God, show respect toward God, obey God, serve God, and worship God regardless of the circumstances.
 - b. For example, to see ourselves as servants, first and foremost, means our focus is on God, first and foremost, rather than ourselves. It means we see ourselves as being here for Him rather than He being here for us. It means He is the exalted one in our thinking, words, and deeds. And when we see ourselves as servants, first and foremost, we know that regardless of how high God raises us or what exalted position He gives us, we are still humble servants of the living God.
5. How do you see yourself in relation to God?
 - a. Without question, you are His child and He is your loving Father. Paul himself said: "Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!' Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God" (Galatians 4:6-7).
 - b. In speaking to His disciples, Jesus said: "You are My friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you" (John 15:14-15).

- c. So without question, God has gifted us with exalted positions. And yet, the scripture also says, “God is opposed to the proud but gives grace to the humble” (James 4:6, 1 Peter 5:5). Why? Because pride puts us in good standing with the world and the devil so that we stand against God, whereas humility puts us in good standing with God so that we live for God.
- d. Therefore, let us fight off pride and feed humility.
 - (1) Let us daily affirm in thought, word, and deed that God is our Supreme Being and Jesus is our Lord.
 - (2) And though we enjoy and can rightly proclaim our status as children of our Loving Father, and as the bride of Christ, and as friends of God – let us daily remind ourselves that we are servants who have the duty of humble submission and faithful obedience to the will of our Master.

B. Romans 1:2-3a . . . which (the gospel of God) He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures, [3] concerning His Son,

- 1. From the time of the disciples until the NT letters being circulated among the churches were treated as God’s authoritative Word, the only recognized, authoritative Scripture was the OT. Therefore, the early church drew on the OT for its understanding of God’s prophetic statements and intentions regarding Jesus Christ. They saw Christ in the OT just as much as we see Christ in the NT. Paul affirms the OT proclamation of Christ in two accounts from the book of Acts.
- 2. Acts 13:32-33 . . . And we (Paul) preach to you the good news of the promise made to the fathers, [33] that God has fulfilled this promise to our children in that He raised up Jesus, as it is also written in the second Psalm, 'you are my son; today I have begotten you.'
- 3. Acts 26:21-23 . . . "For this reason some Jews seized me (Paul) in the temple and tried to put me to death. [22] So, having obtained help from God, I stand to this day testifying both to small and great, stating nothing but what the Prophets and Moses said was going to take place; [23] that the Christ was to suffer, and that by reason of His resurrection from the dead He would be the first to proclaim light both to the Jewish people and to the Gentiles."

- C. Romans 1:3b . . . who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh,
1. Both Matthew and Luke provide us with the lineage of Jesus Christ.
 2. To some, these lists may seem unimportant, but to the Jews, lineage was so important that they were painstakingly conscientious about keeping track of their lineage, for that is how they proved they were Jews and which tribe they were from.
 3. And beyond that, this same meticulous work kept track of who could serve as High Priest, who was a Levitical priest, who was in King David's lineage, and once the Messiah was identified, who was and is part of His lineage.
 4. Therefore, in pointing out that Jesus was a descendant of King David, it affirmed His Jewish heritage and that He was the Messiah.
- D. Romans 1:4 . . . who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord,
1. Though God declared that Jesus was His son at Jesus' baptism and on the Mount of Transfiguration, and though Jesus acknowledged He was the Son of God to His disciples, and to some of the people who came to listen to Him, and to the Sanhedrin on the night before He was crucified, God says the ultimate, the indisputable proof that Jesus is His Son is his resurrection from the dead – for not only did Jesus come back to life, he was raised from the penalty for sin, that is, from Satan's domain, to the right hand of God.
 2. The phrase “according to the Spirit of holiness” seems to refer to the fact that God is perfectly holy and His son, Jesus Christ, is perfectly holy, which is why God could preserve perfect justice in sending Jesus to die in our place to save us from the penalty and power of sin.
 3. Finally, Paul declares the Son of God to be Jesus Christ our Lord. Jesus is His name. Christ is His official title. Lord is His position.
 - a. However, Paul puts the word “our” between Christ and Lord – which means He is not just a lord or the Lord, He is OUR Lord – which makes it very clear what our relationship is to Him in relation to His position as Lord.
 - b. And Paul doesn't stop with this one reference to Jesus Christ our Lord. He speaks of Jesus Christ as being OUR LORD, 13 more times in the book of Romans, thus emphasizing that our present relationship to Jesus includes both eternal salvation and submissive obedience. Which brings us to . . .

- E. Romans 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,
1. At this point, Paul tells us about his own conversion and justification, and his call into service.
 - a. First, Paul says it is none other than Jesus Christ our Lord who gave him grace –*instead of punishment for being a persecutor of God's people*–and who also called him into service for a specific task.
 - b. Then Paul tells us that the specific task he was given was that of bringing about the obedience of faith among Gentiles.
 - c. And finally, Paul says it is Jesus (*for His name's sake*) who wants the obedience of faith spread throughout the Gentile world.
 2. As I have already pointed out, Paul begins and ends his letter with these words: “obedience of faith.” In addition, in Romans 15:18, Paul testifies that he will not presume to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through him, which has resulted in the obedience of the Gentiles by word and deed.
 3. I believe God made these words, “obedience of faith” bookends in the book of Romans for the purpose of affirming that God pleasing, justifying, saving faith is the fusing together of confidence in the redeeming work of Christ and obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ. And I find that God supports this bookend statement in other parts of Romans and in a number of places throughout the Old and New Testament.
 4. For example: In the Garden, the LORD God commanded Adam, saying, “From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die” (Genesis 2:16-17).
 - a. The crafty serpent came along and planted the seeds of distrust when he said to Eve, “You surely will not die! For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil” (Genesis 3:4-5).
 - b. Clearly, the devil was urging Eve to distrust God, and to make her distrust a justifiable reason to disobey God.
 - c. Now the lesson here is that God's way is the obedience of faith, whereas the devil's way is the disobedience of distrust.
 5. Again in the OT, we see the struggle between the obedience of faith and the disobedience of distrust when the Israelites heard the report from the twelve spies just what awaited them in the Promised

Land. Out of fear for their lives and the future well-being of their wives and children, they were convinced the only rational course of action was to disobey God by refusing to go into the Promised Land.

6. The writer of Hebrews used this example of Israel's disobedient unbelief in order to drive home the peril of unbelief. Hebrews 3:12-19 . . . Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. [13] But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called "Today," so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. [14] For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end, [15] while it is said, "Today if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts, as when they provoked Me." [16] For who provoked Him when they had heard? Indeed, did not all those who came out of Egypt led by Moses? [17] And with whom was He angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness? [18] And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who were disobedient? [19] So we see that they were not able to enter because of unbelief.
7. For the sake of time, let me give you just one more example of this struggle between the obedience of faith and the disobedience of distrust. This one took place when Jesus was led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness for forty days and nights to be tempted by the devil (Matthew 4:1-11). We will consider just one of the temptations.
 - a. In the first temptation – turn the stones to bread – the devil urges Jesus to prove his divinity by taking matters into his own hands in order to provide for himself.
 - b. But Jesus, though he was God in human flesh, did not come to do his own will, but the Father's will (John 6:38), regardless of how hungry he was or whatever other need he may have.
 - c. Therefore, to take matters into his own hands and use his powers to feed himself instead of patiently waiting for God to provide would mean he distrusted the goodness and provision of God enough to act according to his own will instead of patiently submitting to God's will in the situation.
 - d. Therefore, Jesus resisted the devil's temptation and preserved the unity of faith and obedience by leaving his need for food in God's hands.

8. This issue of preserving the unity between faith and obedience is of such importance to justification by faith, eternal life, sanctification, and daily living, that I want to finish today by reading selected scriptures that affirm that the obedience of faith is God's way and the disobedience of distrust is only and always the devil's way.
 - a. 1 Samuel 15:22-23a . . . Has the LORD as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams. [23] For rebellion (*disobedience*) is as the sin of divination, and insubordination is as iniquity and idolatry.
 - b. Jeremiah 7:22-23 . . . For I did not speak to your fathers, or command them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings and sacrifices. [23] But this is what I commanded them, saying, "Obey My voice, and I will be your God, and you will be My people; and you will walk in all the way which I command you, that it may be well with you."
 - c. Hosea 6:6 . . . For I delight in loyalty rather than sacrifice, and in the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.
 - d. 1 John 2:28-29 . . . Now, little children, abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming. [29] If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone also who practices righteousness is born of Him.
 - e. 1 John 3:10 . . . By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother.

III. Conclusion

- A. One of the lessons from Romans that is of such importance that God puts it at the beginning, the end, and then sprinkles it throughout is that the faith that justifies, saves, and sanctifies, is the faith that obeys – or as James says, the faith that works – which is why the devil fights so hard to lure us into distrust, for it is those who distrust that disobey.
- B. Therefore, may we stand firm, from now until we see Jesus face to face, in the obedience of faith.