

The Gospel Purpose

Romans 1:5-7

There is a familiar story about three men who were working on a pile of stones at a construction site. A curious passerby asked the first worker, "What are you doing?" He did not look up but abruptly replied, "Chiseling stone."

Hoping for a better answer, he asked the second worker, "What are you doing?" "Bringing home a paycheck."

Still wondering what was going on, he asked the third man, "Sir, what are you doing?" The man dropped his hammer, stood erect, and his face brightened as he waved toward the site and exclaimed, "I'm building a great cathedral!"

All three men were doing the same job, but only the third man had the proper vision to make his job meaningful and to put his heart into it. God does have a wonderful plan for your life. It is called the Plan of Salvation, or the Gospel. In Romans 1 Paul has been focusing on the Gospel of God. Gospel means "good news." The good news of God is that He has a plan for each of us.

Do you know God's wonderful purpose for your life? What is the purpose of the gospel?

If someone asked you how you serve the Lord, what would you say? Some might say, "I teach Sunday School." Or, "I help clean up after church dinners." Or, "I serve as a greeter on Sunday mornings." Or, "I visit those who can't come to church." Or, "I am raising my children to know the Lord."

All of those answers are good as far as they go, but a bigger perspective would be, "God has called me to belong to Jesus Christ and is using me to help build His church and to be His channel for taking the gospel to the nations."

That was the apostle Paul's perspective, as we see in Romans 1:5-7: *God calls us to salvation so that we will serve as channels for the gospel to go to the nations.*

Follow along in your Bibles as I read Romans 1:1-7:

- 1 Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated to the gospel of God**
- 2 which He promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures,**
- 3 concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh,**
- 4 and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.**
- 5 Through Him we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations for His name,**
- 6 among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ;**
- 7 To all who are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.**

If we can understand God's purpose for us, we will live from a different perspective, seeing our lives in light of God's plan. Rather than just doing a job, we will be able to live a life that really matters. So, to understand this, let's look at several purposes of the Gospel. Our text reveals three secondary purposes and one primary purpose of the Gospel. We'll begin by looking at the three secondary purposes and end with the primary purpose.

Three Secondary Purposes

1. To Effect Our Salvation

A purpose of the Gospel is to effect our salvation. Look at verse 5. Paul says, **Through Him**, (that is through Jesus Christ), **we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations for His name.**

A. Salvation Is Received by Grace

The great commission that Paul received from Jesus Christ was grace and apostleship. *Grace* is one of Paul's favorite words. He uses it 100 out of its 155 uses in the New Testament, including 24 times in Romans, the most of any book in the New Testament. Paul is going to major on grace in the book of Romans. Paul received grace, which means, God's unearned, unmerited favor. If you deserve it, it's not grace. All you can do with grace is to receive it.

Paul had received that grace from God and he spent his life from that point on offering God's grace through Jesus Christ to others. You see because, God not only gives grace for salvation, but also grace for service.

Paul did not volunteer to be an apostle, much less an apostle to the Gentiles. Rather, God appointed him to that task (Acts 22:10; Gal. 1:1; 2:7-9). The word apostle means "sent one," and it is used in the New Testament to refer to the twelve and to Paul in the narrow sense of those who had seen the risen Lord (Acts 1:21-22; 1 Cor. 9:1), who performed confirming miracles (2 Cor. 12:12), and who laid the foundation for the church (Eph. 2:20). As such, they were given special authority over the churches (2 Cor. 10:8; 13:10). When those men died, there were no successors with apostolic authority. Their authority is passed on to us in the New Testament.

The word apostle also is applied to Barnabas (Acts 14:4, 14), James (the Lord's brother, Gal. 1:19; 2:9), perhaps Silas (1 Thess. 2:6), and to Andronicus and Junias (Rom. 16:7). These workers were sent out by the churches for various ministries. In this limited sense, missionaries today are "sent ones."

God saved Paul from being a persecutor of the church and graciously called him as an apostle to help lay the foundation for the worldwide church, which Christ promised to build. While none of us are called as apostles in the same sense that Paul was, we also have received grace to serve the Lord.

B. Salvation Is Obedience to the Faith

Paul continues by saying that he has received grace and apostleship **"for obedience to the faith among all nations for His name."**

Paul says he was saved and sent to bring obedience to the faith. This means both that obedience comes from faith and that faith is demonstrated by obedience.

The obedience that comes from faith concerns the foundation of our walk with God. The call of God is a call to obey. Paul makes clear that for faith to be real, it must be revealed in obedience.

Jesus Himself made this clear when He asked, in Luke 6:46, **"Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?"** When we come to Christ, we always come by faith resulting in obedience. Genuine faith is obedient faith.

This has two implications for us all, whether we're gifted as evangelists or not. First, when we present the gospel we must be clear that the call to trust in Christ as Savior is also a call to follow Him as Lord. There is not the option of believing in Christ as your Savior, but having the freedom to continue living in disobedience to His commands (John 3:36).

Second, to be a part of calling others to the obedience of faith requires that we live in obedience to Christ. We must practice what we preach. If you are not living in obedience to Christ, your life will send a confusing message to others. For example, I've seen young women who profess to know Christ, but they're sleeping with their boyfriends. Yet they're also trying to tell them about Jesus, hoping that they will get saved so that they can have a Christian marriage. It doesn't work! It sends a mixed message! If the young woman truly knows Christ, she needs to repent of her sin and break off the relationship with her unsaved boyfriend. Our witness for Christ must flow out of a life of obedience to Christ.

C. Salvation Is for the Called of Jesus Christ.

Verse 6 says, **among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ.** God is the one who calls us to salvation (Rom. 8:30; 2 Tim. 1:9). In 1 Corinthians 1:9 Paul writes, **"God is faithful, through whom you were called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord."**

To be a Christian means that God has intervened in your life, calling you out of darkness and into His kingdom of light, where you now belong to Christ and have fellowship with Him. Paul often refers to our new standing as being "in Christ." We are totally identified with Him. This implies a fundamental break with the world, where we no longer love the world and live for the same things that the world lives for (1 John 2:15-17). We now are those who have been called to belong to the Lord Jesus Christ.

When we come to Christ, we surrender ourselves to belong to Him. We give ourselves to Him. This is our commitment. Later in Romans 6:22 Paul will say, **"But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life."**

We belong to God because He purchased us with the blood of His Son Jesus Christ. The good news is that God through His grace has brought us to the obedience of faith so that we are the called of Jesus Christ. We belong to Him. This is our salvation. A purpose for the Gospel is to effect our salvation.

2. To Enhance Our Significance

Paul's emphasis in all of verses 1-7 is not on what we do for God, but rather on what God has done for us. The basis for any service for Christ is that God has effectually called us to belong to Christ, He has set His love on us, and He has set us apart unto Himself, bestowing His grace and peace on us. The result of God doing all this is for us is that we begin to see how important we are to God.

Look at the first part of verse 7: **To all who are in Rome, beloved of God**

We see that another secondary purpose for the Gospel is to enhance our significance. You see, like the Roman Christians, we are loved by God. This is what gives us our true significance.

Because we live in a society that has largely forfeited its belief in a Creator, we find people looking desperately for a measure of significance for their lives. They seek significance through human relationships only to find that people let them down. They seek significance through their employment only to find that after years of loyal service they are summarily laid off by their company. And the quest goes on. But it is a futile quest without God.

You see, our true significance comes from knowing that God knows all about us and yet He loves us. It was God's will to call us, to adopt us as His own sons and daughters. God has given us what we do not deserve. He has freely bestowed upon us His grace, and made us part of His family. This is why John could say, " **Behold what manner of**

love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! " (1 John 3:1).

There is nothing we can do for God to love us more. God doesn't change us so that He can love us; He loves us in order to change us. Rest in your relationship in Christ. In Christ you're secure. In Christ you are significant because God loves you.

Perhaps you're thinking, "But doesn't God love everyone?" Yes, but He has a special love for His chosen bride. I'm commanded to love every Christian woman as my sister in Christ, but I have a special love for just one: my bride and wonderful wife, Kathy. Even so, **"Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her"** (Eph. 5:25). The foundation for everything that we do for Christ is that He **"loved me and gave Himself up for me"** (Gal. 2:20).

3. To Establish Us as Saints

The final secondary purpose for the Gospel is to establish our sainthood. Paul declares that all in Rome, indeed all Christians, are called to be saints.

Saint is a term commonly applied to all believers. It comes from the Greek word *hagios*, which means "holy." To be a saint, in the New Testament sense of the word, is to be a "holy one." Not self-righteous, to be "holy" in the biblical sense of the term is simply to be set apart for Christ.

Don't be misled by the mistaken idea that sainthood is something that is only conferred upon certain dead people who were extraordinary Christians. According to God's Word, all believers are saints. From God's perspective, we are all saints, not because what we have done or who men say we are, but because of what Christ did for us. We are not holy because of our own good works or righteousness. We are righteous because Jesus died on the Cross so that He could give us His righteousness.

The first aspect of our holiness is positional; it is something believers are declared to be because of their position in Christ (Eph. 1:4). Because of our positional holiness, we are able to become holy in practice, progressively more so as we mature in Christ (1 Thess. 4:7).

In this verse, Paul is focusing on the believer's positional holiness. In the Old Testament, knives, tables, lamps—all the articles of the tabernacle and temple worship in Israel were called "holy" because they were set apart for sacred use. Think of it: one minute a knife is ordinary, the next it is holy, all on the basis of being declared holy (set apart for special use) by the priest.

So when Paul calls the Roman believers saints, what is he saying? He wants them to know that, regardless of how they view themselves, how unimportant they may think themselves to be in the grand scheme of things, they are as "holy" as Paul himself is. Paul is a saint, and they are saints. Paul has been set apart to accomplish God's goal of spreading the gospel to the nations, and so have the Romans. It has nothing to do with spiritual giftedness, the office one does or does not hold, one's education or appearance, one's wealth or poverty, or one's outward manifestations of spirituality. It has everything to do with what God has done in Christ.

When Christ died on the Cross, he paid the penalty for our sin. He died there to put to death our old self. He died to forgive us, and He died to enable us to receive life. When we surrender to Him, He gives us His life in exchange for ours. He becomes our life. We live by His life. He is in us, and we are in Him. So when God looks at us, He sees us in

Do you understand that you are indeed a saint? Can you even begin to comprehend just how much God loves you? Have you given yourself to Christ? Are you walking in obedience to Him? If these things are true for you, then you are a living testimony to the grace of God.

The Primary Purpose: To Exalt Our Savior

The primary purpose for the Gospel is found at the end of verse five. Paul says it is all **for His name**. The purpose of the Gospel of God is to exalt the Savior. It is all by God's grace and for His glory.

What is the purpose of the Gospel? Why do we call people to believe and be saved? "To keep them out of hell." That's secondary. "So they can experience the love of God." That's secondary. "So they can be saints." That's secondary.

People are to be saved for the glory of God. You see, everything in the entire universe finds its meaning in God. He has created all things. He sustains all things. And one day all things will return to Him. This is what Paul means when he says, in Romans 11:36, **"For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen."**

God is the source of all things because He is the creator. He is the sustainer of all things because He supplies what is necessary for life to exist. Therefore all things will ultimately bring Him glory because this was what they were designed to do. The primary purpose of the Gospel is to bring glory to God - to exalt our Savior.

God is glorified when you believe His gospel. God is glorified when you love His Son. God is glorified when you accept His diagnosis of your sin and your need. God is glorified when you take Him into your life.

William Blane wrote a poem based on a phrase from Zechariah 6:13 called

HE SHALL BEAR THE GLORY

He Who wept above the grave,
He Who stilled the raging wave,
Meek to suffer, strong to save,
He shall bear the glory.

He Who sorrow's pathway trod,
He that every good bestowed—
Son of Man and Son of God—
He shall bear the glory.

He Who bled with scourging sore,
Thorns and scarlet meekly wore,
He Who every sorrow bore—
He shall bear the glory.

Monarch of the smitten cheek,
Scorn of Jew and scorn of Greek,
Priest and King, Divinely meek—
He shall bear the glory.

On the rainbow-circled throne
Mid the myriads of His own,
Nevermore to weep alone—
He shall bear the glory.

Man of slighted Nazareth,
King Who wore the thorny wreath,
Son obedient unto death—
He shall bear the glory.

His the grand eternal weight,
His the priestly-regal state;
Him the Father maketh great—
He shall bear the glory.

He Who died to set us free,
He Who lives and loves e'en me,
He Who comes, Whom I shall see,
Jesus only—only He—
He shall bear the glory.—*William Blane*