

Introduction to Paul's Letter to the Romans

When Paul told the Thessalonians that they ought to follow his example, he may as well been writing to me. I have tried to pattern my life and ministry after the apostle Paul. When he said that he acted in a disciplined manner and worked day and night so that he would not be a burden to others, I have worked day and night so and followed my model and example.

(2 Thess 3:7-9) "For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example, because we did not act in an undisciplined manner among you, {8} nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with labor and hardship we *kept* working night and day so that we would not be a burden to any of you; {9} not because we do not have the right *to this*, but in order to offer ourselves as a model for you, so that you would follow our example."

When he addressed Timothy as his beloved son, he was writing to me also. Paul has been a spiritual father to me. His exhortations, encouragements, and charges to Timothy have been addressed to me.

(2 Tim 1:2) "To Timothy, my beloved son: Grace, mercy *and* peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord."

When Paul met with the Ephesian elders and told them that he did not consider his life of any account as dear to himself so that he could finish his course and his ministry, he was speaking to me. I have tried to live my life the same way. When he told them that he did not shrink back from declaring to them the whole purpose of God, I have tried to declare the whole counsel of God.

(Acts 20:24-27) "But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, so that I may finish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God... {27} "For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God."

I am excited about preaching through Paul's letter to the Romans. Paul's letter to the Romans has had a significant impact on all of our lives. Here is the impact on some of our great fathers of the faith.

Martin Luther was a priest and Augustinian monk, who was a professor at the Catholic university of Wittenburg. Between November 1515 and September 1516, he studied and taught the book of Romans. As he studied, he began to understand justification by faith and not by works. He wrote,

"I greatly longed to understand Paul's epistle to the Romans and nothing stood in the way but that one expression, 'the righteousness of God.' Because I took it to mean that righteousness whereby God is righteous and deals righteously in punishing the unrighteous. Night and day I pondered until I grasped the truth that the righteousness of God is that righteousness whereby through grace and sheer mercy He justifies us by faith. There upon I felt myself to be reborn and to have gone through open doors into paradise, the whole of Scripture took on a new meaning, and whereas before the righteousness of God had filled me with hate, it now began to fill me inexpressibly with a sweet love. The passage of Paul became to me the gateway to heaven."

Another great father of the faith was John Wesley, who was one of the founders of the Methodist Church. In May of 1738 he went to a meeting on Aldersgate Street where Luther's Preface to Romans was being read. During that reading something happened to Wesley. He wrote, "I felt I did trust in Christ and Christ alone for my salvation, and an assurance was given me that He had taken my sins away, even mine and saved me from the law of sin and death." Paul's letter to the Romans and Luther's comments on it were instrumental in John Wesley's salvation.

As we start our study of Romans, it is my prayer and desire that God will give me and all of us more understanding of this powerful book of the Bible that has played such a significant role in the lives of so many people. I pray that it will perform its work in us who believe as we study and dig into this rich book of the Bible.

I copied all sixteen chapters of Romans into a Word document so that I could use the search tool to find key words. I found in chapter one that the word gospel is used four times and three more times towards the end in chapter fifteen. In all, it is used ten times. Paul said that he was eager to preach the gospel to those in Rome. We will look at that next week when we look at Paul's purpose for writing this epistle to the Romans.

But the gospel is not the main word that is used. The word righteous or unrighteous is used forty-eight times. The contrasting word, sin, is used sixty times, and the synonym, transgress, is used twelve times. Paul has a lot to say about sin and righteousness. The word faith is used forty-one times. John MacArthur said that he believes the key verse in the whole letter is Romans 1:17, which says that the righteous man shall live by faith.

(Rom 1:17) "For in it *the* righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "BUT THE RIGHTEOUS *man* SHALL LIVE BY FAITH."

This morning we are going to cover Paul's greeting to the church in Rome. Paul identifies himself as the author, and he wrote this letter in 56-57 AD to the saints in Rome, while he was in Corinth. In verse seven he tells who the recipient of the letter is, the beloved saints in Rome. Paul had never been to Rome. He wrote the letter telling them that he desired to come to Rome, but had thus far been prevented. We will cover the purpose of writing this letter next week when we cover Romans 1:8-17. Finally, we will cover Paul's greeting to these Roman believers. It was a standard greeting of grace and peace. Let's read our text for today.

Paul's Greeting to the Saints in Rome

1. Author
2. Recipient
3. Greeting

(Rom 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."

1. The Author

The author of the letter is the apostle Paul. When I receive mail, the first thing that I do is look at the outside of the envelope to see who it is from. If it is a piece of junk mail, it goes straight to the trash can. So, knowing who sent me a letter is important. Knowing that this letter came from the apostle Paul makes it really important. Knowing that all scripture has been inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness so that we will be equipped for every good work, makes it even more important.

(Rom 1:1) "Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called *as* an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God,"

(2 Tim 3:16-17) "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; {17} so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work."

Who was Paul? I thought it would be helpful to look at Paul's resume today. We will look at his personal life, his education, his calling, his career objective, and his work history. This is not the order that most resumes will be put in; it is simply the order that I wanted to use for this message.

Paul's Personal Life

We do not have the exact dates of Paul's birth and death, but theologians place his birth around 3 A.D., about the same time as Christ. His death took place between 64 A.D. and 68 A.D. We have much more accurate records of other details of his personal life. Paul grew up in the town of Tarsus in Cilicia (Acts 9:11). He was an Israelite of the tribe of Benjamin (Philippians 3:5-6). He was circumcised on the eighth day and describes himself as a "Hebrew of Hebrews." Paul was a Pharisee and a son of Pharisees (Acts 23:6).

(Acts 9:11) "And the Lord said to him, "Arise and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for behold, he is praying,"

(Phil 3:5-6) "circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee; {6} as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless."

(Acts 23:6) "But perceiving that one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, Paul began crying out in the Council, 'Brethren, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees; I am on trial for the hope and resurrection of the dead!'"

Paul was a single man. In 1 Corinthians 7, he addresses the widows and unmarried folks. He tells them that he wishes all men were like him, i.e. single. Later on in 1 Corinthians 9 when he defends his apostleship to the Corinthians, he asks some rhetorical questions, including the question about having the right to take along a believing wife, as the rest of the apostles.

(1 Cor 7:7-8) "Yet I wish that all men were even as I myself am. However, each man has his own gift from God, one in this manner, and another in that. {8} But I say to the unmarried and to widows that it is good for them if they remain even as I."

(1 Cor 9:1-5) "Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord? {2} If to others I am not an apostle, at least I am to you; for you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord. {3} My defense to those who examine me is this: {4} Do we not have a right to eat and drink? {5} Do we not have a right to take along a believing wife, even as the rest of the apostles, and the brothers of the Lord, and Cephas?"

Paul's personal appearance was not impressive. Here is a description of Paul given by someone in the 2nd century. "...a man small in size, bald-headed, bandy-legged, well-built, with eyebrows meeting, rather long-nosed, full of grace. For sometimes he seemed like a man, and sometimes he had the countenance of an angel."

Paul's speech was contemptible, despised, or of no account. (Exoutheneo, Strong's G1848) (2 Cor 10:10). Despite this, Paul did not consider himself inferior in any way to the other apostles (2 Cor 11:5-6). He states, "but even if I am unskilled in speech, yet I am not so in knowledge."

(2 Cor 10:10) "For they say, 'His letters are weighty and strong, but his personal presence is unimpressive, and his speech contemptible.'"

(2 Cor 11:5-6) "For I consider myself not in the least inferior to the most eminent apostles. {6} But even if I am unskilled in speech, yet I am not so in knowledge; in fact, in every way we have made this evident to you in all things."

Many Bible scholars believe that Paul had very poor eyesight. In Galatians 6, Paul says, "see what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand." People who have poor eyesight would probably write in large letters so that they could read what they had written. In two of his letters, he writes that he signed them with his own hand. His writing and greeting were a distinguishing mark in his letters.

(Gal 6:11) "See with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand."

(Col 4:18) "I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. Remember my imprisonment. Grace be with you."

(2 Thess 3:17) "I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand, and this is a distinguishing mark in every letter; this is the way I write."

Paul demonstrated characteristics of a "Type A" personality, being very focused, driven, and unwavering in his convictions and principles. He was strategic and planned his ministry trips. He uses phrases like "striving according to His power which mightily works within me." Paul was a person who was driven by goals and had a mission to accomplish. He expected people that traveled and ministered with him to have the same focus and zeal. When John Mark deserted Barnabas and Paul on their first missionary journey, Paul was unwilling to take him along on the second trip.

(Acts 15:37-38) "And Barnabas was desirous of taking John, called Mark, along with them also. {38} But Paul kept insisting that they should not take him along who had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work."

Paul's Education

Paul grew up the son of a Pharisee. He was brought up in strict accordance with the law. His father taught him the law from an early age. He was given a strong Scriptural background by his father. Then, at the age of thirteen, the Bar-Mitzvah or the coming of age occurs for Jewish boys. Bar Mitzvah literally means "son of the commandment." "Bar" is "son" in Aramaic, which used to be the vernacular of the Jewish people. "Mitzvah" is "commandment" in both Hebrew and Aramaic. "Bat" is daughter in Hebrew and Aramaic. (The Ashkenazic pronunciation is "bas"). Technically, the term refers to the child who is coming of age, and it is strictly correct to refer to someone as "becoming a bar (or bat) mitzvah." However, the term is more commonly used to refer to the coming of age ceremony itself, and you are more likely to hear that someone is "having a bar mitzvah."

Strong's H4687. mitsvah, mits-vaw'; from H6680; a command, whether human or divine (collect. the Law):--(which was) commanded (-ment), law, ordinance, precept.

Under Jewish Law, children are not obligated to observe the commandments, although they are encouraged to do so as much as possible to learn the obligations they will have as adults. At the age of 13 (12 for girls), children become obligated to observe the commandments. The bar mitzvah ceremony formally marks the assumption of that obligation, along with the corresponding right to take part in leading religious services, to count in a minyan (the minimum number of people needed to perform certain parts of religious services), to form binding contracts, to testify before religious courts and to marry. A Jewish boy automatically becomes a bar mitzvah upon reaching the age of 13 years, and a girl upon reaching the age of 12 years. No ceremony is needed to confer these rights and obligations. The popular bar mitzvah ceremony is not required, and does not fulfill any commandment. It is a relatively modern innovation, not mentioned in the Talmud, and the elaborate ceremonies and receptions that are commonplace today were unheard of as recently as a century ago.

At the age of thirteen, Paul's education went to a higher level. He was sent to Jerusalem to study under Gamaliel. When Paul is giving his testimony to the commander and the people in Jerusalem, he tells them in Hebrew that he was a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in Jerusalem. He goes on to say that he was educated under Gamaliel, strictly according to law of their fathers.

(Acts 22:3) "'I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city, educated under Gamaliel, strictly according to the law of our fathers, being zealous for God, just as you all are today."

Gamaliel was very well respected by the Jews. We find out more about Gamaliel in Acts 5, when Peter and John are arrested. Gamaliel had Peter and John removed from the room and spoke privately with the Council. He tells them to be careful about what they propose to do with these men. He tells them to stay away from these men and leave them alone. He also tells them that if Peter and John are from God, they will not be able to overthrow them and will be found to be fighting against God. The Council greatly respected him and took his advice.

(Acts 5:34-40) "But a certain Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the Law, respected by all the people, stood up in the Council and gave orders to put the men outside for a short time... {40} And they took his advice; and after calling the apostles in, they flogged them and ordered them to speak no more in the name of Jesus, and then released them."

Paul's strong religious training and background were no mistake. God chose to use Paul to write half of the books of the New Testament. Much of our doctrine for the New Testament was given through Paul. His thorough understanding of both Hebrew and Greek gave him a unique ability to transition us from the Hebrew Old Testament to the Greek New Testament. The following thirteen books of the Bible were written by Paul. Some theologians also attribute Hebrews to him.

Romans	1 Corinthians	2 Corinthians	Galatians
Ephesians	Philippians	Colossians	1 Thessalonians
2 Thessalonians	1 Timothy	2 Timothy	Titus
Philemon			

Paul's Calling

God also has a unique call and purpose for our lives. Paul identifies himself as a bond-servant and an apostle. Many of us don't see ourselves as slaves or bond-servants. We think we have freedom to do whatever we want, when we really belong to God. We are His bondservants, and when we wake up each morning, we need to check in with our Lord and find out what He has for us to do that day. Paul is also an apostle. In Galatians 1:15-16, he tells us that he had been set apart from his mother's womb. His calling as an apostle was determined by God before he was even born. I believe God has a unique call for each of us before we were born. Paul is not the only one.

(Rom 1:1) "Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called *as* an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God,"

(Gal 1:15-16) "But when God, who had set me apart *even* from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, was pleased {16} to reveal His Son in me so that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood,"

Notice what the Lord told Jeremiah. He said to Jeremiah, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I have appointed you a prophet to the nations. He consecrated and appointed Jeremiah as a prophet to the nations before he was even born. In my own life, my mother tells me that she was in the kitchen in Houston when I was about four years old and told her that I was going to be a preacher. God has a special plan for your life also.

(Jer 1:4-5) "Now the word of the LORD came to me saying, {5} "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, And before you were born I consecrated you; I have appointed you a prophet to the nations."

In Luke's account of Paul's conversion, the Lord tells Ananias that Paul is a chosen instrument. God tells him that Paul is to bear His name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel. God had a plan and a purpose for Paul. His family, his upbringing, his education, his personality, and his strengths and weaknesses were not happenstance or a mistake. They were orchestrated by God to achieve His purposes.

(Acts 9:15-16) "But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; {16} for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake.""

Although Paul does not mention that he was a teacher when writing to the Romans, in other scriptures he is referred to as a teacher. When the church in Antioch was planted, Barnabas sought out Paul and brought him there to help teach and equip the body.

(Acts 11:25-26) "And he left for Tarsus to look for Saul; {26} and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. And it came about that for an entire year they met with the church, and taught considerable numbers; and the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch."

In Acts 13, there were five leaders in the church at Antioch who were prophets and teachers. Paul was one of those teachers that was mentioned. While the church leadership was fasting and ministering to the Lord, the Holy Spirit tells them to set aside Barnabas and Paul for the work. The leadership then fasted about the word that they had heard. After fasting and praying about it, they laid their hands on them, and sent them away. It goes on to say that they were sent out by the Holy Spirit. From this point on, Paul is referred to as an apostle. The Greek word for apostle is *apostolos* (Strong's G652). Our English word is what we call a transliteration. The word *apostolos* comes from *apo*, which means away and *stello* which means to set apart. The combination means one who is sent out or set apart. When the leaders and the Holy Spirit sent out Barnabas and Paul, they were "sent ones" or apostles.

(Acts 13:1-2) "Now there were at Antioch, in the church that was there, prophets and teachers: Barnabas, and Simeon who was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. {2} And while they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.'"

(Acts 14:14) "But when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard of it, they tore their robes and rushed out into the crowd, crying out"

Many theologians today deny that Paul was an apostle, but the scriptures clearly teach that Paul was an apostle. There are two groups of apostles, the apostles of the Lamb (Rev 21:14) and then the other apostles. The twelve apostles of Jesus are the apostles of the Lamb. In Acts 1:21-26, Matthias was chosen to replace Judas Iscariot. The qualifications given in Acts 1 were only applicable to find a replacement for Judas, and did not apply to all the other apostles that are mentioned in the New Testament.

(Rom 1:1) "Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called *as* an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God,"

There is much misunderstanding and false teaching about apostles today. I have had a number of men and women tell me that they are apostles. Just because someone fills out a spiritual gift test and they answer particular questions about missions or the church at large does not make them an apostle. Apostles are servants of God who have been given authority and have been sent out by the Holy Spirit to do a particular work. Apostles are a five-fold gift given to the church to equip the church for the work of service. Apostles are not just a ministry gift, they are the first or proton gift that God has appointed to the church. The church is encouraged to earnestly desire the greater gifts, which would be the apostolic, prophetic, and teaching gifts. On the other side of the discussion about apostles, much of the church has bought into the lie that there are no more apostles and prophets. They invent a doctrine of men that says that since we have the canonized Scripture, there is no longer a need for apostles and that apostles ceased in the 1st century. There

is no supporting evidence or Scripture for this false teaching. At a meeting that Tom and I were at a couple of months ago, the leader of that group of churches said that the primary reason for apostles was to write the scriptures. He has obviously sat under some of the false teachings about apostles. The main function of apostles was not the writing of scripture. It was to preach the gospel, raise up leaders and plant churches by laying strong foundations, and to help establish churches. This is still very much needed today.

(1 Cor 12:28-31) "And God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, various kinds of tongues. {29} All are not apostles, are they? All are not prophets, are they? All are not teachers, are they? All are not workers of miracles, are they? {30} All do not have gifts of healings, do they? All do not speak with tongues, do they? All do not interpret, do they? {31} But earnestly desire the greater gifts. And I show you a still more excellent way."

(Eph 2:19-20) "So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, {20} having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone,"

Paul's goal as an apostle was to take the gospel where no man had taken it. He did not want to build on another man's foundation. Apostles lay foundations so it was only right that he go where others had not already laid one.

(Rom 15:20) "And thus I aspired to preach the gospel, not where Christ was *already* named, so that I would not build on another man's foundation;"

Paul knew that he was called to be an apostle of the Gentiles. He did not ignore the Jews, but always went to them first. But after going to the Jews, he would turn to the Gentiles, to whom God had specifically called him.

(Rom 11:13) "But I am speaking to you who are Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle of Gentiles, I magnify my ministry,"

Paul did not just want to bring people into the kingdom, he wanted to establish them in the faith. He wanted to present every man complete in Christ. Therefore, Paul preached more than just the gospel; he taught people how to grow and mature in the Lord.

(Col 1:28-29) "And we proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, that we may present every man complete in Christ. {29} And for this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me."

Knowing what God has called you to do is important so that you can stay on track, and also evaluate if you are accomplishing what God has called you to do. At the end of Paul's ministry, he makes a significant statement to Timothy. He says that he has finished the course and that there is a crown of righteousness awaiting him. Paul knows that he has accomplished the work that God gave him to do. How did he know this? He had a mission statement for his life that was based on the calling that God had given him.

(2 Tim 4:6-8) "For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. {7} I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; {8} in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord,

the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing."

After Paul identifies himself as a bond-servant and apostle, he said that he has been set apart for the gospel of God. Then, he makes several statements about the gospel. He said that God had promised this gospel beforehand through the prophets in the holy Scriptures. The Old Testament was the only scripture at that time. A famous pastor today made a statement a few years ago that we don't need the Old Testament; we should focus on the New Testament. The early church had Paul's letters, but all of the teachers of that day went back to the Old Testament scriptures. The gospel message is woven throughout the Old Testament.

(Rom 1:1-6) "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;

The Old Testament said the Messiah would come through a descendant of David. Paul also mentioned that this descendant of David was also declared the Son of God by the power of the resurrection from the dead. Jesus was fully man and fully God. The deity of God dwelt in Him in bodily form. Paul mentioned that Jesus was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection of the dead according to the Spirit of holiness. Finally, Paul said that they had received grace and apostleship from Jesus to bring about the obedience of faith among the Gentiles, and he included the Romans in that group.

2. The Recipients

The recipients of this letter were the beloved of God in Rome, called as saints. There are two things that I want to initially bring out about this. First, God loves His people. These believers in Rome are beloved of God. God loves you and I. He is a God of love and He loves us dearly. The second thing is that these Roman believers are also called saints. He does not address them as sinners who are doing better than they deserve. It is true that we are doing better than we deserve, but we are saints. There are sixty-one references to saints in the New Testament. Saint means holy one. God sees us as holy ones. We are not holy because of how we have lived; we are holy because Jesus paid the price for our sins and declared us forgiven and holy. Jesus, who knew no sin, was made sin on our behalf, that we might be called the righteousness of God in Him. We are holy because of what Jesus has done for us.

(Rom 1:7) "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."

(2 Cor 5:21) "He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."

There is a balance of love and holiness. God is a holy God and He will judge sin. Some people ask how a loving God would judge people, and they don't realize that He is a holy God and that sin cannot be in His presence. Others focus on His holiness and don't experience His love and tenderness. God is loving and He is holy. He loves us and has called us holy.

The saints in Rome are not just one congregation. When we get to Romans 16 we will see that there were many congregations in Rome. Paul greets the various leaders and households in Rome. He greets Prisca and Aquila and the church that is in their house. He greets Apelles and those who are of the household of Aristobulus. He greets the household of Narcissus. He greets Asyncritus, Phlego, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas and the brethren with them. He greets Philogus and Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints who are with them. This letter was not to a single congregation. It was written to all these churches in Rome, and they met in homes. There is a universal church and there are local churches. These local churches are all part of the universal church, but they had their own pastors in their respective house churches. They were all connected.

(Rom 16:3-15) “Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, {4} who for my life risked their own necks, to whom not only do I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles; {5} also *greet* the church that is in their house.... {10} Greet Apelles, the approved in Christ. Greet those who are of the *household* of Aristobulus. {11} Greet Herodion, my kinsman. Greet those of the *household* of Narcissus, who are in the Lord.... {14} Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas and the brethren with them. {15} Greet Philologus and Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints who are with them.”

3. The Greeting

Paul gives a very standard greeting to the church, “grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” In the Hebrew culture, people did not say, “Hi, how are you.” They greeted one another with a blessing of peace. Typically, they would say, “Shalom,” which means peace. Since this was written in Greek, the word for peace is *eirene* and the word for grace is *charis*. Having grown up in the Middle East, our normal greeting to people was “Salaam,” which means peace. The full greeting is *salaam malaikum*, which means peace be upon you. It is customary to greet and bless people with peace.

(Rom 1:7) “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.”

The peace that Paul blesses them with is a peace that surpasses all comprehension. It is a supernatural peace. It is not the absence of trouble, conflict, hardship, or difficulty, which are all external matters. God’s peace is an internal manifestation. He gives us peace in the midst of troubles.

Consider the following things about our peace. Our peace comes from the God of all peace. His name is the King of Salem, which means King of peace. His name is Jehovah Shalom, which means the self-existent, eternal God of peace. In Isaiah, He is referred to as the Prince of Peace. The fruit of the Holy Spirit, who is God, is love, joy, peace... God not only is peace and bears the fruit of peace in our lives, He promises peace. He tells us that those who set their minds on things above will enjoy peace. He says that those who trust in Him will be kept in perfect peace.

(Judges 6:24) "Then Gideon built an altar there to the LORD and named it The LORD is Peace. To this day it is still in Ophrah of the Abiezrites."

(Isaiah 9:6) "For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace."

(Isaiah 26:3) ""The steadfast of mind Thou wilt keep in perfect peace, Because he trusts in Thee."

(Rom 15:33) "Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen."

(Phil 4:6-7) "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. {7} And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

(2 Thess 3:16) "Now may the Lord of peace Himself continually grant you peace in every circumstance. The Lord be with you all!"

Paul not only greets them with peace, but also grace. There are two definitions of grace that I want to quickly mention. There is an unmerited favor that we have with God. It is by grace that we are saved, not as a result of works that no man should boast. This is an unmerited, undeserved favor that we are given by God. We cannot earn this grace. This grace should create in us a gratefulness and should be reflected in our worship and praise to Him.

(Eph 2:8-9) "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; {9} not as a result of works, that no one should boast."

There is another type of grace that we have. The Lord told Paul in the midst of his afflictions that His grace was sufficient for him. This grace is not just the unmerited favor, but it is the desire and ability to carry out God's will. It is the measure of God's provision in strength, ability, power, gifts, and resources to carry out His will.

(2 Cor 12:9) "And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may dwell in me."

In Romans 12, Paul speaks about this grace a couple of times. He speaks into their lives by the grace that was given to him. Paul was doing an apostolic work and was given the grace to do this work. Paul did not have any more favor with God than you or I. Paul had a desire and ability to do a certain work that God had called him to. He alludes to this grace again at the close of his letter. He wrote them very boldly on some points and he could do that because of the grace that was given to him by God.

(Rom 12:3) "For through the grace given to me I say to every man among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith."

(Rom 15:15) "But I have written very boldly to you on some points, so as to remind you again, because of the grace that was given me from God,"

In Romans 12:6, Paul says that each of them had gifts that differed according to the grace given to them. Like Paul, each of us have been given certain gifts, abilities, and resources to carry out God's call for our lives. Therefore, each of them was to exercise them accordingly.

(Rom 12:6) "And since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let each exercise them accordingly: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith;"

When we greet one another, we should learn to extend grace and peace. Our words should encourage and motivate one another to have more desire and ability to accomplish God's will. Our words should not bring trouble and unrest but peace. Our words should bring about a calmness and rest. Our words should bring about a trust in God and His word. Our speech needs to be seasoned with grace. This grace opens people up; it opens doors of communication. This grace endears us to people. It makes people want to be around us. It is this grace and peace that will make a difference in our ministry and lives.

Conclusion and Applications

We have looked at the life of Paul, the author of the letter to the Romans. We saw that God had a call on his life before he was even born. God used his family background and education to prepare him for the work that He had called him to do. God has a unique call on each of you. He gave you the gifts and abilities that you have. He put you in the family that you were raised in. He has a unique call on each of you. Can you, like Paul, declare who you are in Christ and what He has called you to do? Are you striving according to all of your ability to fulfill that call? Lord, I pray for those that know their calling, that You would continue to prepare them and use them in the work You prepared in advance for them to accomplish. I pray that You will give them grace. And Lord, for those that may not be sure of that calling right now, that You would communicate that to them. You would bring Ananias' into their life to prophesy. Holy Spirit, I pray that You will speak to them out of the Scriptures and show them what You have called them to do. Thank You for the example of Paul that we have before us.

We have also looked at who Paul wrote to, the beloved saints in Rome. God loves each of you; you are the beloved saints of the Connection Church of Rome. God wants you to know this morning how special each of you are and how much He loves you. He loved and demonstrated His love to us so that we could love Him and love one another. Do you know God's love in your life? If you have never experienced and known His love I pray that you will come to know and experience God's love. I pray that all of us will return to our first love, that we will love the Lord our God with all of our heart.

We also saw that Paul addressed this letter to the saints, or holy ones of Rome. God is a holy God and He has called us to be holy. We are holy because Jesus took our sins upon Himself and gave us His righteousness. He has declared us to be holy. Now, God wants us to live holy lives. If you have believed and received Christ into your life, you are a saint. You are not a sinner who tries to do God; that was you before you were saved. You are a saint, and are expected to live like a saint. When you sin, you are to confess it, but you are a saint.

Finally, Paul gave a greeting of grace and peace. As we end this morning, I pray that God will fill each of you with His peace and grace this coming week. Amen.

Q&A

Introduction to Paul's Letter to the Romans (2 Thess 3:7-9, 2 Tim 1:2, Acts 20:24-27, Rom 1:17, 1:1-7)

1. The Author (Rom 1:1, 2 Tim 3:16-17,

- **Paul's Personal Life** (Acts 9:11, Phil 3:5-6, Acts 23:6, 1 Cor 7:7-8, 9:1-5, 2 Cor 10:10, 11:5-6, Gal 6:11, Col 4:18, 2 Thess 3:17, Acts 15:37-38)
- **Paul's Education** (Acts 22:3, 5:34-40)
- **Paul's Calling** (Rom 1:1, Gal 1:15-16, Jer 1:4-5, Acts 9:15-16, 11:25-26, Acts 13:1-2, 14:14, 1 Cor 12:28-31, Eph 2:19-20, Rom 15:20, 11:13, Col 1:28-29, 2 Tim 4:6-8, Rom 1:1-6)

2. The Recipients (Rom 1:7, 2 Cor 5:21, Rom 16:3-15)

3. The Greeting (Rom 1:7, Judges 6:24, Is 9:6, 26:3, Rom 15:33, Phil 4:6-7, 2 Thess 3:16, Eph 2:8-9, 2 Cor 12:9, Rom 12:3, 15:15, 12:6)

Conclusion and Applications