

06. The Book of Romans—1:8

(2/8/23)

We have begun a study in the Book of Romans—and are currently in the introduction which covers verses 1 thru 7.

Paul's introduction to Romans is the longest (by far) of any of his other epistles—an introduction he packs a lot of theology into—which we have been trying to 'dig' out.

Romans 1:1, 5–7 (NKJV)

¹ Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called *to be* an apostle, separated to the gospel of God... 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.

“**beloved of God**” literally means—“*God’s loved ones.*”

Do you believe that God loves you—I mean do you really believe He loves you no matter what?

We often struggle with that truth—we accept it by faith and in principle but struggle with it in practice—in our everyday practical lives.

You can be great theologian, you can be a tireless missionary, you can be a faithful Christian servant—but if you doubt that God loves you unconditionally you will never be all that He wants you to be or enjoy all that He has for you as His child.

The devil knows that which is why he constantly attacks us in this regard—he constantly tries to get us to doubt God’s love for us based on our circumstances.

I believe much if not most of the spiritual warfare we face is all about Satan trying to get us to doubt God's love for us because he knows our whole Christian life is built on God's unconditional love for us as His people.

But if you ever doubt God's love for you—all you have to do is look at the cross:

Romans 5:8 (NKJV)

⁸ But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

The 'grace' mentioned here ("Grace to you")—is not the grace that saves (Paul's readers were already saved)—but the grace that *equips* and *empowers* for Christian living and service:

2 Peter 3:18 (NKJV)

¹⁸ but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ...

The 'peace' Paul mentions here is not '*peace with God*'—the saints already had this kind of peace because they were already justified by faith (saved)—

Romans 5:1 (NKJV)

¹ Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,

But rather, the kind of peace Paul is referring to in verse 7 is the supernatural '*peace of God*' (Phil.4:7) reigning in their hearts while they were in the midst of persecution for their faith.

This 'grace' and 'peace' came from God our Father...

Of course, the greatest privilege we have as believers is to be able to call God our Father.

The universal '*fatherhood of God*' is unscriptural.

All people are the *creation* of God—but not all people are universally the *children* of God:

Romans 8:15 (NKJV)

¹⁵ For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, “Abba, Father.”

A person cannot call God “Father” until they have received Jesus as their Savior and are born-again (yes, born of the Holy Spirit—but also ‘born into the family of God’).

The Bible repeatedly holds up obedience to God as the evidence a person has really been born into the family of God:

Matthew 7:20 (NKJV)

²⁰ Therefore by their fruits you will know them.

Romans 8:14 (NKJV)

¹⁴ For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

Titus 1:16 (NKJV)

¹⁶ They profess to know God, but in works they deny *Him*...

Grace and peace came ‘from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.’

By this statement, Paul is strongly implying the equality of the Son with the Father—which is the theme of the gospel of John:

John 5:17–18 (NKJV)

¹⁷ But Jesus answered them, “My Father has been working until now, and I have been working.”

¹⁸ Therefore the Jews sought all the more to kill Him, because He not only broke the Sabbath, but also said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God.

John 10:31–33 (NKJV)

³¹ Then the Jews took up stones again to stone Him. ³² Jesus answered them, “Many good works I have shown you from My Father. For which of those works do you stone Me?” ³³ The Jews answered Him, saying, “For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy, and because You, being a Man, make Yourself God.”

However, this was no misunderstanding on their part—it was something Jesus affirmed in the strongest possible way:

John 8:24 (NKJV)

²⁴ Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am *He*, you will die in your sins.”

If Jesus were only a man, it would be absurd to list Him as equal with the Father in bestowing **‘grace and peace.’**

It would be like saying, “*Grace and peace from God the Father and from Abraham Lincoln.*” Or “*Grace and peace from God the Father and from Billy Graham or Phil Ballmaier.*”

Of course, Jesus Christ is the only Man ever born that was fully God and at the same time fully Man—which makes Him unique and distinguishes Him from all other people who have ever lived.

This is a truth that even unbelievers recognize about Him:

Ralph Waldo Emerson—

“The name of Jesus Christ is not so much written as it is ‘plowed’ into the soul of the history of the world.”

One Solitary Life (actually written by a pastor challenging unbelievers to come to terms with the uniqueness of Christ):

“Here is a man who was born in an obscure village, the child of a peasant woman. He grew up in another village. He worked in a carpenter shop until He was thirty. Then for three years He was an itinerant preacher.

He never owned a home. He never wrote a book. He never held an office. He never had a family. He never went to college. He never put His foot inside a big city. He never traveled two hundred miles from the place He was born. He never did one of the things that usually accompany greatness. He had no credentials but Himself..

While still a young man, the tide of popular opinion turned against him. His friends ran away. One of them denied Him. He was turned over to His enemies. He went through the mockery of a trial. He was nailed upon a cross between two thieves. While He was dying His executioners

gambled for the only piece of property He had on earth – His coat. When He was dead, He was laid in a borrowed grave through the pity of a friend.

Nineteen long centuries have come and gone, and today He is a centerpiece of the human race...

I am far within the mark when I say that all the armies that ever marched, all the navies that were ever built; all the parliaments that ever sat and all the kings that ever reigned, put together, have not affected the life of man upon this earth as powerfully as has that one solitary life.”

Starting with verse 8 we move from the ‘head’ to the ‘heart’ of Paul.

In the first 7 verses of the epistle to the Romans—we have the opening salutation where Paul briefly introduces himself before presenting the theme of this letter which is: “*The Gospel (Good News) of God.*”

The content of the first 7 verses is *doctrinal*—but starting in verse 8 and running thru verse 17, we move from the doctrinal to the *personal* as Paul is sharing his heartfelt desire to see these Christians for the first time and to share their mutual love for one another.

So here in these verses, Paul bears his heart—he allows this group of people, whom he has never met, to get a glimpse at who he, the apostle Paul, really is on the inside.

Romans 1:8 (NKJV)

⁸ First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.

The first thing Paul reveals about himself is that he is **thankful** to God for these brothers and sisters in Rome—and for their **faith** which was being spoken throughout the whole world!

So many Christians are only thankful for other Christians who belong to their denomination or religious affiliation (and tend to hate everyone else like the Pharisees did).

Whereas Paul was thankful to God for everyone who professed faith in Jesus Christ!

One of the ways you know you're growing as a Christian is: you love to argue doctrine less and love the Body of Christ more. (Comment)

“Your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.”

That was Paul's way of saying the ‘*whole known world*’ of which Rome was the capital.

Listen, when Rome ascended to power it made sure that “*all roads led to Rome*”—which guaranteed that Rome would be the center of commerce, trade, and tourism in the world.

But another unintended consequence was that it opened the way for the free flow of information.

You see, if all roads led to Rome—it also meant that all roads led from Rome as well.

And that allowed the testimony and faith of the Christians living in Rome to spread like ‘wildfire’ throughout the known world.

Let me give you a brief historical background so that you appreciate the first century Greco-Roman world that God ordained so the good news of God could spread throughout the known world of that day.

Galatians 4:4 (NKJV)

⁴ But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman...

In the Greek language there were two words for time—first of all there is the word "kairos" which means "*opportune time*."

This speaks of seizing an opportunity when it comes your way—an opportunity that often comes out of the blue without any planning on your part.

And then there's the word "kronos" from which comes our word "*chronology*" which is the orderly progression of events—in other words, when everything follows the proper sequence and is exactly right.

The word used in Galatians 4:4 is "kronos," indicating that God just didn't decide on the spur of the moment to take advantage of an opportune time.

But rather, God orchestrated the sequence of events, and when the time was just right—He sent His only begotten Son into the world.

In what way was it the right time?

It was the right time *politically*.

In the first century, the Roman Empire was at its zenith of power and glory.

Rome had given the world good roads, a relatively fair system of government—and most important it had given the world peace (the famous Roman 'Pax Romana').

For the first time in history, people could travel with relative ease almost anywhere in the empire which meant—those early Christians could carry the message of the gospel all over the known world.

It was the right time *culturally*.

Alexander the Great had conquered the world three centuries earlier and then 'Hellenized' it by imposing on it Greek culture, philosophy, and the Greek language.

The influence of Greek culture and language was so powerful that—even after the Romans conquered the world people still spoke Greek.

Greek was the most precise and descriptive of all ancient languages—and God ordained that it was the language of the first century, the language everyone understood—a universal language perfect for the quick spread of the gospel.

“So, in the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman...”