

Jason Upchurch - Romans 1:1-7 - The Gospel We Preach

This morning as we specifically celebrate the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ and worship around the Word of God I want us to look at this amazing passage that opens the book of Romans. The book of Romans is an absolutely phenomenal book that explains in detail the person and work of Jesus and our need for him. If you haven't read the book of Romans in a while I encourage you to make it the next book you read in the Bible.

As we've been studying through Mark we've seen the life and work of Jesus and we've unpacked the significance of his life and work. Here in Romans, Paul condenses the significance of Jesus in these 7 opening verses and I think he does so with 8 simple truths about Jesus. And that's what I want to focus in on this morning.

7 truths:

1) Jesus is the Good News from God. **Read 1**

Here we meet the author of Romans, the apostle Paul. He is the late-comer apostle who went from being a persecutor of Christians to a Christian himself. It was on the road to Damascus, a city northeast of northern Israel where Jesus appeared to the apostle Paul in brilliant glory. Paul was not looking for Jesus - he was looking to persecute followers of Jesus. But Jesus was looking for Paul.

Paul, who was known as Saul at the time, was blinded and told to remain in Damascus until he heard from a guy who confirmed that the very Jesus he was persecuting was actually calling him into service.

From all eternity past Jesus had set apart this one man to be used to proclaim the greatness of Jesus. And Paul gives us a few descriptions of his relationship to Jesus.

He is a servant of Christ Jesus. Literally a slave. Jesus is the Lord, the Master. Paul is the servant. We often think of Paul as this amazing man of God who did all these amazing things and planted dozens or even hundreds of churches. But when Paul thinks of himself he thinks of himself first and foremost as a slave of Jesus. That's really what that word means.

And this is not in a self-deprecating way. Paul isn't wallowing. No; he is a content and joyful slave of Jesus. I think that's actually why many of our translations say "servant" rather than slave because the word slave gives the impression that someone doesn't want to do this.

But that couldn't be further from the truth. Paul rejoiced that Jesus was his Lord, his master and that he was worthy to be called a slave of Jesus.

Paul also says that he was called to be an apostle. What does it mean to be called? The idea is that Jesus chose Paul for this very mission. He chose Paul from all eternity past and at just the perfect time Jesus saved Paul and set him on a mission. Paul was now an apostle. What is an apostle? In that day an apostle was just an official representative sent on a mission. Paul had been charged by Jesus to tell the gospel to the Gentiles.

And here's the key: he was set apart for the gospel of God. **Read 1**

Paul was set apart - he was chosen - by God for the gospel. What's the gospel? In Greek it's euangellion - where we get our word "evangelical." And it just means good news.

What Paul was set aside to do was preach good news. Whatever else we can say about Jesus and the Bible: Paul was a messenger of Good News.

Not religious news / not Jewish news / not guilt trip news / not clean yourself up news / not philosophical news. Good news. The best news. That through faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and repentance from sin, we are no longer under the wrath of God but are now sons of God and have eternal life with God.

If you're here this morning and you think Jesus is drudgery or the commands of God are burdensome or that Christianity is just a list of dos and don'ts just know that that's not how the Bible portrays Jesus at all.

Jesus is good news that God forgives repentant sinners who trust in him alone for salvation.

2) Jesus was Promised Beforehand. Read 1-3a

So the Son, Jesus, was promised beforehand through the Scriptures.

When Jesus came on the scene 2,000 years ago, God wasn't just making stuff up as he went along. Even his death and resurrection were ordained by God and spelled out in the OT by the prophets who wrote the books.

In fact, every part of Jesus's life was planned out and ordained by God and much of that plan was revealed beforehand in the Old Testament. Here's just some of the ways prophets told us about Jesus:

- Messiah would be of the human lineage of Abraham, David, Solomon and at the same time be fully divine: God in the flesh.
- Messiah would be born of a virgin, in Bethlehem, but grow up in Nazareth - very specific.
- Messiah would flee to Egypt and then return.
- He would have a forerunner who would announce his coming but that forerunner wouldn't be in Jerusalem or some metropolis, but out in the wilderness.
- He would live in Galilee.
- He would preach in parables so that seeing, the people could not perceive and hearing they could not understand.
- That he was the chosen suffering servant of Isaiah 42-53 who would be sinless but who would die as a sacrifice for his sinful people.
- That he'd be betrayed by a close friend for 30 pieces of silver, and that betrayer would go kill himself in a way that cursed him and his whole household; Judas died a cursed death.
- That he would die a cursed death - on a tree - but that in the process he wouldn't break any bones: this is very specific details about his execution hundreds of years before crucifixion was even invented.
- His grave would be a new grave, in a rich man's tomb but that he wouldn't even be there long enough to decay.
- He would rise and ascend to the right hand of God the Father.

There are dozens if not hundreds of very specific prophecies about Jesus in the OT given to us all over the place. You can basically put together the entire life of Jesus through reading the OT. This is why Jesus said in **John 5:39** that the Scripture bear witness about him.

And on the road to Emmaus after his resurrection he can start with Moses and the prophets and walk the disciples through the OT showing them how the Scriptures explicitly talked about the sufferings and glory of the Messiah.

This is why Paul and all the apostles would start in synagogues when they entered a town. "Let me tell you what this scroll of Moses or Isaiah or Joel or Samuel says about Jesus." They didn't have the NT, they proved Jesus from the OT.

Before we move on just understand, this isn't just nerdy, historical data. God promised beforehand this gospel. **Read 1-2**

All these things God promised in his grace to save people from their sins. Some people get really nerded out by all the OT connections to Jesus and that's okay, but the real point is that these are precious promises to save people from damnation and give them eternal life in Christ Jesus. These are sovereign promises of grace.

Jesus is good news / Jesus was promised beforehand.

3) Jesus is fully man. Read 2-4

So we usually refer to Jesus as the God-Man. And in this little section Paul highlights both of these truths as essential to the gospel: That Jesus is fully God and fully man. Scholars call this the hypostatic union. It is the

union of the fully divine nature of Jesus to his human body. Jesus is one person with 2 natures. This is essential to the gospel.

I'm reading a book right called Christianity and Liberalism from the 1920s and I'll be honest: it feels like it was written last year. The liberal mindset to undermine anything supernatural about the Bible and Jesus has always been around. German liberals in the 1920s are no different than today. They don't want Jesus to be anything more than a good man and they want to write off all the miracles.

The problem is that if Jesus is just a good man, the things he's claiming about himself are pretty astonishing. He's going to judge the whole world? Believe in him like we believe in the Father? Jesus never repents of any sin, the apostle Paul called himself the chief of what? Sinners. Jesus is not just a man, he's the God man.

But - and this is huge - he is fully man. That's the first point here. And we have to just pause and say that this is great mystery that we'll never be able to fully comprehend. We should attempt to understand it as best we can, but there's only so much we can grasp.

Chalcedonian Creed (451) - Cited from Grudem Sys. Theo 2nd Ed.

"We...teach men to confess one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the same perfect in Godhead and also perfect in manhood; truly God and truly man, of a reasonable soul and body; consubstantial with the Father according to the Godhead, and consubstantial with us according to the Manhood."

That's not a word salad - that's actually the early church trying to put up some guardrails for us. Jesus is truly man.

And we see that here because he was descended of David. We already saw that that was a promise that God gave to David. That promise is found in **2 Sam. 7** where God promises to give David an heir who will sit on his throne forever. Solomon didn't sit on the throne of David forever. Jesus sits on the throne of David forever. He is the King of kings and Lord of lords according to the flesh.

This is essential for us to believe. The reason that it's essential is without him being fully man there is no sacrifice that will cover us.

Part of the reason that the blood of bulls and goats don't cover sin is that it's impossible for a bull or a goat or a lamb to actually take the place of human. The life of a bull does not equal the life of a human. Humans are made in the image of God to have dominion over all creation. Bulls are walking hamburgers. We're not the same.

Turn to Heb. 2:14-18. The author of Hebrews makes it clear that Jesus had to be fully man. Why? So he could be an offering on our behalf. Here the author is talking about how Jesus was made perfect through suffering. In order to suffer he had to be a man. Here's the logic. **Read 14-18**

So Jesus had to take on the nature of man - a fully human nature - to be our priest. To sacrifice himself for us. He didn't take on the nature of angels, that's why there's no salvation for fallen angels. No, he helps the offspring of Abraham - humans who are part of the covenant of God. And **Vs. 17** makes it clear: he had to be made like us in every respect in order to be a propitiation for our sins. **Read 17**

Jesus can only make propitiation for the sins of his people if he's human. That's the only way it works. Propitiation is an offering that removes the wrath of someone else. If I ask to borrow one of your tools and I break it because I was foolish, propitiation is purchasing a brand new and better tool for you to replace it to assuage your anger.

Because God is holy and righteous, our sin eternally offends him. Because of sin all people are born as children of wrath. We are spiritually dead on arrival and God and with us. And yet at the same time in his mercy he sent his own Son Jesus in the flesh to propitiate his own wrath toward us. The Father poured out all his righteous and holy anger on the God-Man Jesus for the sins of all his people.

He bore our sin in his what? Body on the tree. **1 Pet. 2:24**

Jesus has to have a real human body, a truly human body in order to bear our sin on the cross. He partook of flesh and blood - a truly human body - for the very purpose of dying for his people. There's no other way to save us. And by the way he will always be a man. For all eternity future the Son of God will have his divine nature and a human nature. He took on flesh permanently for all eternity to save those the Father gave him. Amazing.

Back in Rom. 1 the other twin truth is the next part.

4) Jesus is fully God. Read 3-4

So here's a question you have to ask: how do we know Jesus was actually God? I mean think about it. From the outside he just looks like a man. He looks like flesh and blood. He eats and sleeps and gets tired and has the full range of emotions. He just looks like a guy.

We could say miracles. He does some amazing miracles. But the problem with that is that other people in the Bible do miracles. Moses did tons of miracles through God. Elijah, Elisha, the apostles. These were all flesh and blood men. We don't worship them. The Bible even gives indication that false prophets can do miracles.

We could say that Jesus claims to be God, but a lot of people have done that over the millennia. Why worship Jesus as God? How do we know we should do that?

Paul says the key to all of this is the resurrection. Jesus was declared to be the Son of God in power by his resurrection from the dead. The resurrection is the key to everything.

It proves that he is the Son of God. The resurrection proves he is fully divine and worthy of all our worship.

And don't be fooled by that title. Sometimes people think calling Jesus the Son of God means he's not fully God or not as glorious as the Father. No, on the contrary it equates Jesus with all the divine glory of the Father. As the Nicene Creed says he God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God by whom all things were made. He is fully God alongside the Father and Spirit - three in one.

John 1:1: The Word was with God and the Word was God.

Romans 9:5: Christ is God over all.

Titus 3:4: He is our God and Savior.

And the resurrection proves that.

Lots of people died claiming to be somebody great. There were even false Messiahs in Israel's history. People who gathered a following and tried to make a name for themselves. But there was only one who came and lived a perfectly sinless life, who continually claimed to be God, who taught as though he had the same authority as God: "you've heard it said but I say to you..." and was raised from the dead. And that person is Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

It's interesting Paul says he was declared to be the Son of God in power. He was declared. Who declared that message? God the Father. God the Father declared Jesus to be the Son of God. He didn't do that with an audible message from heaven, he did it by raising Jesus from the dead through the Holy Spirit.

It's amazing that throughout the NT all 3 persons of the Trinity are said to be involved in the resurrection: Father, Son and Spirit. And here, it's the work of the Spirit raising Jesus that the Father declares that Jesus is his powerful Son.

And he's no longer weak and susceptible to death. He is the Son of God in power sitting at the right hand of God the Father almighty.

Jesus is the good news / Jesus was promised beforehand / fully man / fully God.

5) Jesus is Lord. Read 4

What is a Lord? What does that mean? Generically it just means a master. Someone who is in charge and gives orders. He has authority over people.

It's also more than that because we see throughout especially the OT that God is often referred to as the Lord. In fact, even when God's own name is used - Yahweh - it is usually translated by our Bible's as LORD in all capital letters. And so Lord conveys intrinsic divine authority.

This is who Jesus is. He is our Lord, our Master, our Sovereign.

There was a movement decades ago that said a person could believe in Jesus as Savior but not as Lord and still be saved. This was the easy believism movement: Just acknowledge some of the truths of the Bible, just acknowledge in some kind of vague way you love God and you're good. Your sins will be forgiven and all will be well. There's no call to obedience, no call to transformation or repentance.

But that is a far cry from what the Bible teaches. Since Jesus is the Lord and God has declared that by raising him from the dead then he is Lord of all the universe whether we acknowledge him or not. He reigns on high and demands our obedience and every person will give an account to him.

Jesus has to be your Lord in order to be your Savior. Do you follow him as the Lord - the Master - of every area of your life?

His resurrection establishes that reality.

6) Jesus is worthy to be praised. Read 5-6

God gave this apostleship to Paul that they would go and proclaim Jesus throughout the whole world - all the nations.

God didn't want this simply because he was tired of our sin or just wanted everything put in order. If you have kids you know sometimes it's an uphill battle to have some sort of order in your household where everyone is just singing on the same page. It can be frustrating.

Is that why God sent Jesus? To get rid of a divine headache at putting up with us? No. It's for the sake of his name. It's for the glory of the name of Jesus.

The second person of the Trinity took on flesh when he entered the world, he lived a perfect life, died as a sacrifice in the place of guilty, disgusting sinners for the sake of his own name. So that he would be praised eternally for that grace.

Ephesians 1:5: He predestined us...to the praise of his glorious grace.
We have an inheritance...so that we will praise his grace. We have the Spirit so we praise him.

All that he has done in salvation is to show how how great is his name. All these things are to show to majesty of his name's sake.

Amazing Grace:

When we've been there 10,000 years bright shining as the sun
We've no less days to sing his praise than when we first begun.

Jesus is the good news / Jesus was promised beforehand / fully man / fully God / Lord / Worthy to be praised.

7) Jesus is the only way to grace and peace. **Read 7**

Those who are in Rome, loved by God and called to be saints. Are you loved by God this morning?

There's a truth that in a way God loves all people. He gives everyone rain and sun and life and breath. That's a grace. He gives many good things to people who don't even love him.

But there's another truth that those who don't know Jesus are the objects of his wrath. That God is every day angry with the wicked and will judge all unrighteousness. Every sin exposed and every evil deed punished in the lake of fire forever. So while we can say there is a way in which God loves all people, it's not the same love as he has for his people.

But here Paul is talking about a special love that God has for his saints, for Christians. For people who have turned from their sins and follow Jesus. If that's you know that you are deeply loved by God.

And God has blessed you with peace and grace. **Read 7**

This is the best news ever. That God before the foundation of the world planned to send his Son into the world not just to save repentant sinners, but to bless us and shower us with grace for all eternity.

He is so filled with love and grace and peace he blesses us with it through his Son Jesus. How do we know? Because Jesus isn't in the tomb. He has risen. Lord of All.

Hallelujah. What a Savior.

Pray