

BIBLE & BAGEL

Romans – Our Common Faith

11 December 2015

The book of Romans was written by the Apostle Paul to the church in Rome somewhere around the 60s AD. The church as we will see consisted of both Jews and Gentiles and the Apostle speaks quite a bit about how two cultures could live together because of their common faith.

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. NKJV

The Apostle Paul begins by informing his audience who it was that was writing the letter, some of the older ones among us will remember that when we were taught letter-writing in school, the writer was supposed to place his own name and address in the top left hand of the letter so the recipient would immediately know who the sender was. So Paul begins by telling the church who he was.

He calls himself a “bondservant” of Christ; a bondservant was a slave who had earned his freedom yet chose to serve his master out of his own free will. When the slave makes such a choice the master would take him to a post and there pierce his ear with a nail, this marked him as the master’s property. God has placed the seal of His Holy Spiritⁱ on us marking us as His very own bought with the price of Christ’s blood.

Then he calls himself an “Apostle” meaning one who is sent, he says he was separated and sent for the sake of the gospel which had been prophesied in the Scriptures. The prophecy of the gospel goes back to the book of Genesis where God promised that he would send “The Seed” that would crush the head of the serpent i.e. Satan.ⁱⁱ This tells us that the gospel does not begin at the book of Matthew but it was from the very foundation of the world, it is part of God’s great eternal plan, and by believing it we have decided to take part in it.

He says that the gospel is about Jesus Christ who is the Son of David and by His resurrection is proven to be the Son of God. Why does he need to mention this? He mentions the Son of David because he was speaking to the Jews in the church in Rome, he wanted them to realize that Jesus was not just another teacher or prophet but in His natural life, He came from the Royal Lineage of Israel, this was important because they needed to know first that the gospel was not a foreign religion and secondly that Jesus was their prophesied King. To the Gentiles he emphasized the fact that Jesus was the son of God and this was proven by His resurrection. This made Jesus superior to all the gods of Rome as none of them had ever died for the sake of the people and then defeated death.



In verse 5 he tells them that God had given him grace; meaning favour and also gifted so that he could be an apostle (ambassador) to all nations both Jews and non-Jews, thus he was not restricted to just one set of people and was qualified to speak to both. A note; Paul although a Jew was born in the city of Tarsus, a Gentile city, and spent much of his life there and thus was very familiar with the Gentile lifestyle so he was well qualified to minister to them. This is the wisdom of God who chose him from his mother's womb for this very purpose. God has a purpose for each one of us; we must seek it out so that we can fulfill it as a bondservant is supposed to.

Paul says that he was commissioned to bring the nations to "obedience to the faith". I find this very interesting most people today think of the gospel as a means by which we are blessed and definitely we are but the primary call of the gospel is to obedience because Jesus is the King, when we believe in the gospel we are subjecting ourselves to His rule in our lives and we must obey.

The passage ends with Paul's greetings to all the believers and he says they are called "saints" the words "to be" are usually in italics in our printed bibles and that denotes that it is not in the original text but rather added by the English translators. So Paul actually calls believers "saints" and he is not referring to people who have been declared a saint by the Pope, in fact there was no pope in those days. He is declaring a spiritual fact; believers are saints! We may not feel very "saintly", in fact when we look at ourselves honestly we can enumerate our faults and failures. The word simply means one who has been sanctified or set apart. When we put our faith in Jesus for salvation, He cleansed of our sin and set us apart for His own purposes, this is not dependent on whether we shed tears at the time of salvation or whether or not we serve in church etc. It is a spiritual fact that we need to realize so that we can live the life that God has prepared for us and be the people that God meant us to be.

Pray that God will help you realize that you are a saint so that you can be one.

ⁱ Ephesians 1:13
ⁱⁱ Genesis 3:14-15

