

## Introduction to Romans

Romans 1: 1-7

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In considering briefly the inspired introduction to this great epistle, it may be of interest to consider the character of the vessel used by the Holy Spirit to write it. Who was this man who describes himself as the "bondman of Jesus Christ"?

We first read of him in the book of the Acts as being present at the stoning of Stephen (Acts 7: 58). He later confirmed that he was consenting unto the death of Stephen (Acts 22: 20). The account the Holy Spirit has left on record in the first eight chapters of Acts leaves us in no doubt that, at that time, he was a hater of our Lord Jesus Christ. He informs us himself that he came of the tribe of Benjamin (Philippians 3: 5). Like his former namesake Saul the son of Kish (1 Samuel 9: 1, 2), who hounded David the anointed of God, intent upon his destruction, Saul of Tarsus was just as intent upon the extermination of the Name of Jesus — David's greater Lord. These two men of the tribe of Benjamin were naturally true to type for both characteristically were "ravening wolves" (Genesis 49: 27). Could a more fitting vessel be found both as an example of the power of the gospel, and as a willing devoted servant to pass on the good news to others? — not now as Saul of Tarsus but as "Paul a bondman of Jesus Christ." We understand that Saul means "asked" — probably a reference to the fact that Saul the son of Kish was asked for by the people. "Make us a king to judge us like all the nations" (1 Samuel 8: 5). We are also told that Paul means "little." If this is so how significant that this truly great man should willingly speak of himself as "the bondman of Jesus Christ," for that is the true rendering of the word "servant".

Thus Paul was led of the Holy Spirit to describe himself as a bondman of Jesus Christ and an apostle by calling. As such he was "separated unto the gospel of God," v. 1. We have often heard that this word translated "gospel" simply means "good news," or "glad tidings." We may well ask — what better tidings could guilty sinners hear than that a Saviour had been provided by God who would set them in right relations with Himself if they would but accept the One He had provided, owning and confessing Him as their Lord? (Romans 10: 9).

We are next told that this presentation of the Son of God as the Saviour had been long promised in the prophetic writings of the Old Testament. That promise having been now carried into effect was an assurance of the faithfulness of God. Then as to the theme of the gospel it is "concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord." All that has been effected both for the glory of God and the blessing of mankind is centred in this blessed Person — "His Son" — who, coming into this world in Manhood was of the seed of David. It is striking that in the genealogy of Joseph (the supposed father of our Lord) many kings are named but only one is so called — "David *the king*" (Matthew 1: 6). Thus we are assured that the One born of this kingly line would be a deliverer. When Solomon came to the throne it is recorded that he said, "But now the LORD my God hath given me rest on every side, so that there is neither adversary nor evil occurrent," (1 Kings 5: 4). We can but conclude that David had subdued all, and thus stands out as a type of our Lord — the mighty Deliverer of mankind. What good news indeed that the Son of God has come into this world in Manhood, subduing every opposing force against the rights of God, and thus opening a way of complete deliverance for all who are wise enough to trust in Him and own His rights in Lordship over them!

This delivering power in the hands of our Lord was amply demonstrated by Him in His pathway through this world. While His own resurrection was the greatest act of power effected in this world, verse 4 refers to the fact that He demonstrated that power on at least three occasions during His ministry to Israel. These acts of power should have convinced all that He was in truth the "Son of God," (verse 4). His own resurrection was the crowning witness to the glory of His Person.

As alive from among the dead and glorified in the presence of God, His voice had been heard from the glory by the apostle, calling him in infinite grace to be His representative to the nations. The glorious testimony of the apostle was that the once dead, but now living and glorified Saviour, is the great Mediator between God and men. Blessing was now to be obtained by faith in Him, not by any works of law which the sinful race of men were utterly unable to perform. What was now required from men was a work of *faith*, and that work is summed up in one word "obedience," (verse 5).

Writing to these saints at Rome Paul assures them that, having believed the gospel which he declared to them, they were now "the called of Jesus Christ," and as such were attached to Him in heaven above, with His Name resting upon them. Not only were they blessed through Him, but they were to be His representatives in this world. He then assures them of another blessed fact which was true of them — they were "beloved of God"; and the great desire of the apostle for them was that they should be in the enjoyment of the grace of God with His peace filling their hearts. With this he commits them to "God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ," (verse 7).

Such in brief is the introduction of the apostle to the saints "in Rome." He then proceeds, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to outline the great truths of the gospel of God which fill out this very important and needful epistle.