

Romans
Message Seven
Son of God
Rom 1:1-7

1 Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God,
2 (Which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures,)
3 Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made 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 By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all
nations, for his name:
6 Among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ:
7 To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from
God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. KJV

Introduction:

In previous messages we have delved into the issues raised by Paul in this beginning portion of the letter to the Romans.

As we have noted, this work was probably composed at Corinth on Paul's Third Missionary Journey, just before he set his eyes on Jerusalem, intending to return there with a gift for the Judean Christians which he had gathered from among the Gentile churches.

Even though he was warned by the Holy Spirit through prophets that the trip would bring into imprisonment, his determination to go had not slackened and he was, indeed, taken into custody after a riot near the Temple.

He spent a little over two years in mild imprisonment in the area of Palestine before the determination was finally made to send him to Rome for an appearance before Nero, the Roman Emperor at that time.

The church at Rome, if you will recall, seemingly had sprung up without the involvement of any of the apostles. Some faithful soul, undoubtedly, had traveled there and had been used of God to begin the church. Or, maybe, several who had been converted in other places had been relocated to the capitol city, found each other and began to assemble for worship and edification. Someone, or several someones, as it appears from the letter to the Philippians had been gifted by God with the ability to teach and had taken leadership roles in the church.

Having organized without apostolic input there would necessarily have been certain issues in which these people needed further instruction and Paul was anxious to lay out the gospel as it had been agreed upon by the apostles with the blessing of the Holy Spirit.

Interestingly enough, when Paul arrived in Rome, still in Roman custody, he found that there were some in the church who had a negative view of him and his ministry. They would cause him problems during his stay there, possibly through failures to understand this very letter that we are studying.

As Paul opened the letter he introduced himself, the gospel, the fact that the New Testament gospel had been promised in the Jewish scriptures and he has introduced Jesus, the man, the son of Abraham and the heir to David's throne.

Fortunately he did not stop there but continued on in V.4 to affirm Him as the Son of God, the Resurrected One and the source of our salvation.

Before we go any further, let us think about this term, 'The Son of God.'

In the world and culture in which we live the idea of being someone's son has little, if any, real meaning. We have little sense of connection to the past, to traditions, or even to our immediate past. But in Jewish life of the First Century being a 'son' tied one very closely to the identity and the occupation as well as the character of his father.

The idea was that the 'son' of some man or, metaphorically, of some idea was closely, almost inseparably, linked. Father and son were thought to be of the same essence, the son being the same as or in some instances greater than his father. David, for example, was thought to be of good character as the son of Jesse but eventually outstripped him in honor by becoming both King and Prophet to the people of Israel.

There was a great emphasis in Israel upon family and tribe. Each of the 12 tribes had been allotted a territory within Israel. These were divided up within the tribes by families and the land belonged to each family in perpetuity. It could only be 'sold' as it were until the next year of Jubilee, the 50th years, when it reverted back to the family that had originally owned it.

Whose son one was determined whether one would be poor, mediocre, or wealthy because some land produced much more than other land.

Remember the Prodigal. He was entitled to a great fortune because of who his father was.

The character of one's father went a long way in people's formations of opinions concerning a young man. If one's father was well respected he had a 'head start' as it were in building a reputation for himself.

The linkage between father and son was often expressed in one's name. For example the disciple of Jesus called Bartholomew was actually going by his father's name, Tolmai. He was probably, as we learned when we studied the men of the New Testament, the man whose actual name was Nathanael. But there was a linkage between the man and his father so that the son was respected because his father had earned the respect of the community.

You may also remember a famous blind man whose actual name we never knew. We only know him as the son of Timaeus, or, as our text calls him Bartimaeus. Again, the importance of the connection between father and son is noticed and almost taken for granted by the New Testament writers.

Sometimes this quirk of culture was used in metaphor to connect an idea or pattern of behavior or attitudes to certain people.

Jesus used it to condemn the wicked and insulting remarks some of the Jews made to Him concerning His Own birth and the character of His parents. They were actually people who John described as having ‘believed’ on Jesus.

John 8:39-44

- 39 They answered and said unto him, Abraham is our father. Jesus saith unto them, If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham.
- 40 But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God: this did not Abraham.
- 41 Ye do the deeds of your father. Then said they to him, We be not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God.
- 42 Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me.
- 43 Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word.
- 44 Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it. KJV

They resisted His teaching, finally accusing Him of being born to immoral parents. Jesus’ response was swift and stern, identifying them as unregenerate people but notice vs.43,44, how He did it.

I fear that many in our day who supposedly ‘believe on Jesus’ are in just the same condition.

To say that their father was the devil was to say that they were of the same nature and of the same character as Satan himself. Now, they were not sons of the devil in the same way that He was the Son of god but, rather, it was a metaphor to show connections... and we all understand that quite well.

Jesus used the idea in a positive way (we think) concerning James and John. Their father’s name was Zebedee but he gave them a new designation in Mark 3:17 where He called them Sons of Thunder, possibly because of their energetic preaching or because of their zeal and fervency (M. Henry). But, it is clear that He made a point of connecting their persons, their names, with an idea that He approved very much, zealous service.

The idea of sonship also had a great deal to do with status and privilege.

Consider:

Heb 11:23-25

- 23 By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment.
- 24 By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter;
- 25 Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; KJV

The issue is that he forsook all that could have been his considering his status as an adopted son of royalty, the “son of Pharaoh’s daughter.” He chose the opposite, rejecting the ‘great opportunities’ that could have been his as a result of his ‘name.’

You will recall, I hope, that the angel who came to Joseph to announce the birth of Jesus spoke to him as a person of status because of his great ancestor.

Matt 1:18-20

- 18 Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost.
- 19 Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a publick example, was minded to put her away privily.
- 20 But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. KJV

Even though Joseph was only a carpenter, he knew his family lineage and he knew the promise of God to Israel and to David concerning the coming Messiah. But it is interesting to notice that the angel considered him a person to be respected because he was a ‘son of David.’

The Jews undertook once to demean Jesus, calling Him “the son of Mary.”

Mark 6:1-3

- 1 And he went out from thence, and came into his own country; and his disciples follow him.
- 2 And when the sabbath day was come, he began to teach in the synagogue: and many hearing him were astonished, saying, From whence hath this man these things? and what wisdom is this which is given unto him, that even such mighty works are wrought by his hands?
- 3 Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at him. KJV

So, I hope you see the idea. If one was the son (or the descendant) of someone great he was

esteemed honorable. If he was known for some trait or disposition, he was called the “son of” that particular quality. If he was evil and worthless, he might be called the “son of the devil.” A person’s character and nature was constantly thought of in terms of who his father was.

Consider this to illustrate the idea. Suppose you are at an event and you are introduced to a guy you have never met by someone who knows your family. He says, “this is Bill Nelson, you remember his father don’t you? He was Fred Nelson.” Instantly your mind goes back to a memory. There was a time when your family was not doing very well financially and Fred Nelson had cheated your father out of a huge sum of money which meant years of difficulty and barely getting by before your father recovered monetarily from that loss, but he never recovered from his loss of trust and respect for Mr. Nelson. As a result, you are quite reluctant to give his son even the consideration of a friendly greeting and handshake. Inside, you are thinking, “I wonder how much this guy is like his father.”

Now, suppose the story is different. During that difficult time your father was having Fred Nelson offered him a really good and well-paying job which greatly improved your family’s position. Mr. Nelson always treated your father well, gave him time off for family vacations, continually gave him raises and moved him up in the company until your father was one of his most trusted and highest ranking employees. Your father finally retired from the company with a good pension. Now, someone introduces you to Mr. Nelson’s son. How different are your thoughts as you look at this man whose father did so much to make your early days at home wonderful?

This is a little glimpse at the idea the Jews used. The human race lived for a long time without the capacity to do electronic background checks on people and decisions were made on who to trust and who not to trust by a person’s reputation or by the reputation of his family. Who a man’s father was made a huge amount of difference on the opportunities for advancement that would be offered to a young man. Unless a man proved differently he was thought of as being the same as his father in all important ways. Young men grew up with it impressed upon them that their lives were a reflection on their father and very few wanted to bring disgrace upon his father.

The second part of this equation really rests, you see, on the Nature and Character of the father. Jesus being called “The Son of God” means that people are to think of Him as having the same qualities as The Father, the Person Whom we all call “God.”

It was not a casual thing at all for the Jews because they understood that any claim to be Son of God was a claim to Deity, something they were not prepared to accept from a man whom they could see, in spite of the mighty power which was obvious in Him.

You may remember these words from His trial.

Matt 26:63-65

63 But Jesus held his peace. And the high priest answered and said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God.

- 64 Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.
- 65 Then the high priest rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy.
KJV

To claim to be or even acknowledge one's self to be Son of God was blasphemy to them. They could not regard it as a casual statement. This was considered to be evidence enough for Him to be executed.

It was also a thing which struck fear into the heart of Pilate.

John 19:6-9

- 6 When the chief priests therefore and officers saw him, they cried out, saying, Crucify him, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Take ye him, and crucify him: for I find no fault in him.
- 7 The Jews answered him, We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God.
- 8 When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he was the more afraid;
- 9 And went again into the judgment hall, and saith unto Jesus, Whence art thou? But Jesus gave him no answer. KJV

And, of course, this fact has tremendous implications for every one who encounters it.

If Jesus Christ is the Son of God then the Infinite Deity really has come to earth to do what He said He would do, "save His people from their sins."

If He has really set Himself to rescue a certain group of people from their sins, He has done it for it is impossible for Him to fail.

If He has saved them from their sins then He has done it in such a way as to effectively deal with their sins while at the same time remaining completely pure and holy Himself.

If He has done that then they are and always will be perfectly secure.

And, if He has done that for people, they are the recipients of an unimaginable gift. They owe Him absolutely loyalty and obedience.

Let us look again at how Paul continued from this affirmation.

Rom 1:5-7

- 5 By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name:
- 6 Among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ:
- 7 To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from

God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. KJV

By Him and through Him, the Son of God, *we have received grace*.

A question came to my mind because of the way this statement is constructed, “who is the ‘we’ here?” And the answer must be obvious, *all of those who have received grace*. This will have a profound impact upon how we understand the text.

Grace, as I have often demonstrated in times past, is the spiritual enabling to do a thing which we were unable to do without it. It is not ‘unmerited favor,’ because that is what we call ‘mercy.’ It is the actual ability to do a thing that is beyond our capacity at the greatest and most intense level of effort. What is that? Consider Paul’s words in another place.

Eph 2:8-10

- 8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:
9 Not of works, lest any man should boast.
10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them. KJV

By the enabling of God we have been saved through faith, which is not a thing that we conjured up within ourselves, it was always beyond our greatest effort, it is the gift of God.

Paul wanted to be emphatic that we did not do it ourselves that he affirmed “not of works” knowing that if it were men would brag, like those do who think they have done it themselves.

“We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus.” He not only made us when He made Adam, made us when we were conceived, supervised our birth and development, but He made us over again, made us new when He called us to faith and worked a life-giving miracle in our souls.

But notice how Paul phrased the statement in Rom 1:5, “By whom we have received grace,” indicating that Jesus is instrumental but is also a “pass-through agent,” meaning that the enablement to believe, even the believing itself, came from His Father, the Almighty God.

Let me give you a couple of biblical examples.

Soon after Israel had conquered the Land of Canaan, the next generation departed from the Lord to serve idols.

Judg 3:8-11

- 8 Therefore the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel, and he sold them into the hand of Chushan-rishathaim king of Mesopotamia: and the children of Israel served Chushan-rishathaim eight years.
9 And when the children of Israel cried unto the LORD, the LORD raised up a deliverer to the children of Israel, who delivered them, even Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother.

- 10 And the Spirit of the LORD came upon him, and he judged Israel, and went out to war: and the LORD delivered Chushan-rishathaim king of Mesopotamia into his hand; and his hand prevailed against Chushan-rishathaim.
- 11 And the land had rest forty years. And Othniel the son of Kenaz died. KJV

The reason that Othniel was able to delive Israel is that the enabling power of God (**Grace**) came upon him and caused him to be able to prevail.

It happened in a more direct and person way many times with Samson.

Judg 14:19

- 19 And the Spirit of the LORD came upon him, and he went down to Ashkelon, and slew thirty men of them, and took their spoil, and gave change of garments unto them which expounded the riddle. And his anger was kindled, and he went up to his father's house. KJV

Why did Samson have strength? It was not because he was a muscle man but because God enabled him (**Grace**).

How do we believe? Because the Spirit of God comes upon us and enables us to believe in the way that God receives. The very same kind of enabling that came upon the prophets, judges and kings of old is the kind that grants God's people the ability to have faith.

But, there is another piece to this passage.

By whom we have received grace **and apostleship**...

The same ones who receive **grace** also receive this thing called '**apostleship**' but, what is that?

My question as I have studied this passage is "how can Paul say that all of those who have received **grace** had also received **apostleship**?"

There were only 14 men who truly ever owned that title. Judas, of course, was shown to be a fraud and Matthias, well, he is a question mark in the minds of many. There is one passage which hints to us that there may have only ever been 12 actual apostles.

Rev 21:10-14

- 10 And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God,
- 11 Having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal;
- 12 And had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel:
- 13 On the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates.

14 And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. KJV

The Holy City that John saw already exists. It may or may not be a physical structure but it is built on the foundation of 12 apostles, the last of which was Paul.

It is obvious, then, that all of us have not been called as apostles, in fact, no one since the First Century has been called as an apostles. Those men were not able to pass along to others what God had given to them.

So how have we all *received apostleship*? Just this way, we all belong to the same city which rests on the foundations laid by God through those men. Our faith is built on the revelation given to the world through them. Take away the apostles and there is no record of Jesus Christ and no documents to tell us what to make of His coming. Nor are the benefits of those 12 men limited to only certain of those who receive grace. We are all built upon their foundation and, therefore, we all have received *apostleship*, the blessings and benefits of their lives and labors.

Deity Himself has come into the world to save you and He has left behind the testimonies of the apostles.

Is it possible that we should consider all of that and reject Him, reject His teachings and die in our sins?

Is it possible that we should actually receive all of that and still show up at the Great Judgment with heads hung down in embarrassment for having served Him poorly?