

PAUL—GOOD NEWS FOR A BROKEN WORLD!

*A Prepared Servant
With a Prepared Message
For Prepared Hearts*

Romans Series
PBC 2025

Texts: Romans 1:1-7; Acts 21:37-22:29; Acts 24:10-21; Acts 26:1-32;
Philippians 3:3-11; I Cor. 16:9

Romans 1:1–7 *Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, ² which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, ³ concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh ⁴ and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, ⁵ through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations, ⁶ including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ, ⁷ To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

Acts 21:37–22:21 *As Paul was about to be brought into the barracks, he said to the tribune, “May I say something to you?” And he said, “**Do you know Greek?**” ³⁸ Are you not the Egyptian, then, who recently stirred up a revolt and led the four thousand men of the Assassins out into the wilderness?” ³⁹ Paul replied, “**I am a Jew, from Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no obscure city.** I beg you, permit me to speak to the people.” ⁴⁰ And when he had given him permission, Paul, standing on the steps, motioned with his hand to the people. And when there was a great hush, **he addressed them in the Hebrew language**, saying: ¹ “Brothers and fathers, hear the defense that I now make before you.” ² And when they heard that he was addressing them in the Hebrew language, they became even more quiet. And he said: ³ “**I am a Jew, born in Tarsus in Cilicia, but brought up in this city, educated at the feet of Gamaliel according to the strict manner of the law of our fathers, being zealous for God as all of you are this day.**” ⁴ I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and delivering to prison both men and women, ⁵ as the high priest and the whole council of elders can bear me witness. From them I received letters to the brothers, and I journeyed toward Damascus to take those also who were there and bring them in bonds to Jerusalem to be punished. ⁶ “As I was on my way and drew near to Damascus, about noon a great light from heaven suddenly shone around me. ⁷ And I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?’ ⁸ And I answered, ‘Who are you, Lord?’ And he said to me, ‘I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting.’ ⁹ Now those who were with me saw the light but did not understand the voice of the one who was speaking to me. ¹⁰ And I said, ‘What shall I do, Lord?’ And the Lord said to me, ‘Rise, and go into Damascus, and there you will be told all that is appointed for you to do.’ ¹¹ And since I could not see because of the brightness of that light, I was led by the hand by those who were with me, and came into Damascus. ¹² “And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, well spoken of by all the Jews who lived there, ¹³ came to me, and*

standing by me said to me, 'Brother Saul, receive your sight.' And at that very hour I received my sight and saw him. ¹⁴ And he said, '**The God of our fathers appointed you to know his will, to see the Righteous One and to hear a voice from his mouth;** ¹⁵ **for you will be a witness for him to everyone of what you have seen and heard.** ¹⁶ And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name.' ¹⁷ "When I had returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple, I fell into a trance ¹⁸ and saw him saying to me, 'Make haste and get out of Jerusalem quickly, because they will not accept your testimony about me.' ¹⁹ And I said, 'Lord, they themselves know that in one synagogue after another I imprisoned and beat those who believed in you. ²⁰ And when the blood of Stephen your witness was being shed, I myself was standing by and approving and watching over the garments of those who killed him.' ²¹ **And he said to me, 'Go, for I will send you far away to the Gentiles.'** "

Philippians 3:3–11 *For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh— ⁴ though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also. If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more: ⁵ circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; ⁶ as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless. ⁷ But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸ Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith— ¹⁰ that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, ¹¹ that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.*

Introduction:

When someone sets out to climb a mountain like Everest, even seasoned climbers enlist the help of a qualified guide. Prices for guided trips vary based on the qualifications and certifications of the guide, but top-notch services from qualified, certified guides can cost over \$40,000. And that's just for the guide. When all expenses are considered, a trip to Everest can exceed \$75,000!

Is it worth the cost? One climber said: *"The financial cost of climbing Everest is steep, but the experience of standing on the world's highest peak is priceless. This journey isn't just about reaching the summit; it's about personal achievement, pushing one's limits, and being part of a historic tradition!"*

We are embarking on the first leg of a journey through a book that some have called "The Mount Everest of the Bible." This journey will test our resolve, demand our attention and strength, and engage every spiritual muscle God has given us. However, the experiences we encounter along the way will transform us for the better! When we stand on the summit beside Paul and behold the majestic view of God and the Gospel of His grace through which He saves the world, we will join our voices with Paul's and proclaim from a full heart – *"To the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ! Amen!"* (Romans 16:27)

No one can guide us on our climb better than someone who has received God's immense grace and experienced the Gospel's transforming power. In other words, no one is better positioned to share the story found in Romans than someone who has personally lived this story and been profoundly affected by its truth. And Paul is such a person! Because the gospel he unashamedly proclaims and carefully explains has radically changed him, he is confident it will change people like you and me!

When Paul searched for a word to capture the depth and splendor of the gospel detailed in the first 11 chapters of Romans, the Holy Spirit gave him the term "mercies" (12:1). This term resonated with Paul because he himself had received immense mercy from Jesus! Listen to his words to his protégé in the faith, Timothy:

1 Timothy 1:12–15 *I thank him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me faithful, appointing me to his service,¹³ **though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent. But I received mercy** because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief,¹⁴ and **the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.**¹⁵ The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that **Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost.***

This morning, I want us to meet the author and allow Scripture to more fully explain why God selected Paul as the apostle to the nations. I want us to do this so that God can use Paul's story to shape our own!

Perhaps the best way to accomplish our objective is to recognize that Paul was a prepared man for a prepared moment in time with a prepared message from God on a prepared mission for God.

I. God Prepared a Man (1:1)

Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God,

Thoroughly trained in the traditions of his ancestors, deeply influenced by Greek culture and wisdom through Diaspora Judaism, and born a Roman citizen, Paul was comfortable, well-prepared, and fully capable of engaging with every aspect of the world he was called to reach for Christ through the gospel!

When God chose to save the world through the Gospel of His Son, He specifically prepared a man for this monumental task! Just as God equipped Paul to reach the world of his time, He is equipping you and me to reach the world of our time.

A. His Background (Acts 21:27-22:3)

God used three distinct influences from three vastly different worlds to shape Paul in ways that uniquely prepared him for the work to which God called him. In Acts 21 and 22, Paul provides three separate self-identifications that help us understand the significance of this providential shaping.

1. Greek Influence: He explained to the Roman tribune that he spoke Greek by indicating he was a citizen of Tarsus, which was no obscure city! (21:37-39).

- Paul's ancestors came from a small village near Galilee in northern Israel. Eventually, they migrated, either voluntarily or forcibly, to Tarsus, which is situated about 10 miles from the Mediterranean Sea at the foothills of the mountainous region of Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey).

- With a population of more than 50,000 people, Tarsus was one of the largest cities in the world of Paul's day.
- The city served as a strategic center of influence in military, economic, educational, and religious matters. It exemplified Hellenism (Greek culture and philosophy), surpassing even Athens in Greece and Alexandria in Egypt.
- During his time there, Paul learned Greek and became familiar with Greek philosophers and poets, some of whom he quoted in his sermon on Mars Hill (Acts 17:22-34).
- Much of his writing style and excellent logic were undoubtedly influenced by his education in Tarsus.

2. *Roman Influence:* Paul emphasized his Roman citizenship to the centurion, preparing to scourge him (Acts 22:25).

- During Paul's time, Roman citizenship was greatly sought after, and it was rare for a Jew to hold such citizenship.
- At some point, Paul's father or grandfather was awarded this prestigious status, which was inherited by Paul at birth.
- This citizenship paved the way for Paul to spread the gospel throughout the empire!
- The Empire's political and organizational structure granted him the freedom to preach the gospel to the diverse nations and ethnicities that made up the Empire.
- And it was his citizenship that ultimately brought the gospel to the highest echelons of the Empire – Caesar's own household.

3. *Jewish Influence:* To the Jewish crowd clamoring for his arrest, he emphasized his Jewish heritage as a devout follower of the Law and his fervent dedication as a Pharisee. (Acts 22:3)

- On at least four occasions, Paul reviews his former life as a Pharisee and a persecutor of Christ and His Church (Acts 22, 26, Galatians 1; and Philippians 3:1-6).

- Perhaps the fullest and clearest account of how Paul viewed himself and the pride he took in the status afforded him by his Jewish heritage is in Philippians 3:1-6.

For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh— ⁴ though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also. If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more: ⁵ circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; ⁶ as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless. ⁷ But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ.

- a. Regarding his covenant status – “circumcised on the 8th day.”
 - b. Regarding his nationality – “of the people of Israel.”
 - c. Regarding his tribal identity – “of the tribe of Benjamin.”
 - d. Regarding his social pedigree – “Hebrew of Hebrews.”
 - e. Regarding religious identity – “as to the law, a Pharisee.”
 - f. Regarding his spiritual fervor – “as for zeal, a persecutor of the church.”
 - g. Regarding his outward holiness and religiosity – “as to righteousness under the law, blameless!”
- If any man had confidence in his outward conformity to the Law of Moses, his place among God’s chosen people, and his standing before God, it was Paul.
 - But something happened to Paul that changed his perspective on everything about his life:
 - a. He came to see his outward righteousness from God’s perspective – as filthy rags!
 - b. He came to see himself as God saw him – a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent of God and of Christ (1 Tim 1:13).
 - c. He came to see himself as the chief of sinners who desperately needed mercy, grace, and forgiveness (1 Timothy 1:15).

- What happened to Paul must happen to every one of us. We must see ourselves through God's eyes, not our own! We must measure our righteousness against the internal righteousness God desires, not merely external conformity to and performance of a law code.

B. His Conversion (1 Timothy 1:12-15; Acts 22:4-16)

- How did it happen? He was shown mercy!
1 Timothy 1:12-15 *I thank him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me faithful, appointing me to his service, ¹³ though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, ¹⁴ and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. ¹⁵ The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost.*
- When did it happen? At the height of his arrogance and rebellion at a time when we would have least expected God to convert him!
Acts 22:4-8 *I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and delivering to prison both men and women, ⁵ as the high priest and the whole council of elders can bear me witness. From them I received letters to the brothers, and I journeyed toward Damascus to take those also who were there and bring them in bonds to Jerusalem to be punished. ⁶ "As I was on my way and drew near to Damascus, about noon a great light from heaven suddenly shone around me. ⁷ And I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?' ⁸ And I answered, 'Who are you, Lord?' And he said to me, 'I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting.'*
- What happened? God opened His eyes, declared a word to him, and Paul confessed the truth about Jesus with his mouth!
Acts 22:9-16 *Now those who were with me saw the light but did not understand the voice of the one who was speaking to me. ¹⁰ And I said, 'What shall I do, Lord?' And the Lord said to me, 'Rise, and go into Damascus, and there you will be told all that is appointed for you to do.' ¹¹ And since I could not see because of the brightness of that light, I was led by the hand by those who were with me, and came into Damascus. ¹² "And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, well spoken of by all the Jews who lived there, ¹³ came to me, and standing by me said to me, 'Brother Saul, receive your sight.' And at that very hour I received my sight and saw him. ¹⁴ And he said, '**The God of our fathers appointed you to know his will, to see the Righteous One and to hear a voice from his mouth; ¹⁵ for you will be a witness for him to everyone of what you have seen and heard. ¹⁶ And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name.'***

- Why did it happen? So that Paul would be a witness for Christ to everyone about what he saw and heard!

Acts 22:14-15 And he said, 'The God of our fathers appointed you to know his will, to see the Righteous One and to hear a voice from his mouth; ¹⁵ for you will be a witness for him to everyone of what you have seen and heard.

This was the mire out of which God rescued Paul! And until we see the ugliness of Paul's former life, we will never understand how deeply he loved God for the mercy extended to him!

What drove Paul to do what he did, journey where he journeyed, and endure what he endured for the gospel's sake was the mercy he discovered that day on the road to Damascus!

And that mercy is the only force strong enough to energize our own souls, enabling us to share the gospel with everyone God places in our path!

C. His Appointment (Romans 1:1)

Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God

1. Commissioned as a servant of Christ

- First association is that of a bond-servant – willingly and fully devoted to the service of his master, in this case Messiah, Jesus!
- Second association is Paul's recognition that God had commissioned him to a ministry similar to that of the prophets. Note the similarity between his commissioning and that of Jeremiah – both commissioned from the womb (Jer. 1:5) and that of Isaiah (Is. 49:1)).
- Third association is the connection of Paul's mission as an extension of the mission God had given His Servant in Isaiah 49:1-7, especially vs. 6).

2. Called as an apostle of Christ

- Generally, Paul recognized he was called to serve as an authorized witness and sent to announce a specific message about Jesus Christ to the nations.
- Specifically, Paul recognized he had been called to a unique role and was granted distinct authority to accomplish two tasks: first, to welcome Gentiles into the kingdom of God as full members with all the rights and privileges originally bestowed upon Israel; second, to establish the doctrinal foundation for the faith and practices of these believers and organize them as members of the body of Christ—His Church.

3. Consecrated as an ambassador of the Gospel

- “Set apart” = horized off.
- Paul realized that God selected him from the womb for a specific purpose: to be an ambassador, sharing the good news from God with the nations that were rebelling against Him (Psalm 2), just as Paul had once rebelled against Jesus!
- Paul became a gracious ambassador of the gospel of grace! This gospel fulfills all of God’s promises, completes the Law, takes a man who was once hopeless and at enmity with God, alienated from His kingdom, ruined by sin, and condemned under the Law, and declares him righteous. It frees him from sin, grants him citizenship in the Kingdom of Heaven, and adopts him as a child of God!

Which brings us to this question – what is the gospel God commissioned Paul to take to the nations?

II. God Prepared a Message (1:1-4)

Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, ² which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, ³ concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh ⁴ and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord,

Paul describes the gospel he was commissioned to preach as God's message to the world! In this text, it is described as:

A. God's good news (1:1)

- Very different than the "good news" offered by Ceasar!
- Very different than the "good news" offered by Moses!

B. Promised in the OT (1:2)

- Promised to Eve (Gen 3:15)
- Confirmed to Abraham (Gen 22)
- Validated by the Prophets (Isaiah 53)

C. Centered on Jesus (1:3-4)

- Who is David's promised Son at his incarnation.
- Who is God's Son appointed in power at his resurrection.
- Who is Jesus Christ Our Lord!

Paul recognized Jesus, who he had once despised as a blasphemer and fraud, as God's promised Messiah. He repented of his self-righteousness and embraced Jesus as his personal Lord and Savior!

This is what it means to confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord. This is what it means to believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead! And this is what is required for you to be saved!

III. God Prepared a Mission (1:5-7; Acts 22:21)

Romans 1:5-7 *Through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations, ⁶ including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ, ⁷ To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

Acts 22:21 *And he said to me, 'Go, for I will send you far away to the Gentiles.'* "

- Paul was assigned the same mission that Jesus gave His disciples in Matthew 28:19-20: to go to the nations and make disciples by evangelizing and instructing them to be followers of Jesus Christ.

A. Consisting of bringing about a particular kind of obedience God demands of all people, including the nations.

- Obedience that consists of faith (1:5; 16:26).
- A faith that continues to obey by living in newness of life (6:1-14) by the power of the Holy Spirit (8:1-4).

B. Done for the sake of Christ's name (1:5)

- The advancement of Christ's name among the nations
- The exalting of Christ's name by the nations

C. Resulting in the transformation of all who believe (1:6-7)

To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

- Into beloved sons and daughters,
- Enabled to live holy and righteous lives,
- As citizens of the kingdom that really matters,
- Because grace and by means of mercy,
- In the context/atmosphere of true peace (shalom),
- From God through the Lord Jesus Christ!

And the first and foremost proof that God could and would do this for the worst sinner who would humble his heart, repent of his sins, and embrace Jesus as Lord of his life . . . was Paul!

God knew what he was doing when He prepared Paul for this great mission! And He knows what He is doing when he called you to salvation, prepared you for service in His kingdom, and commissioned you to take the gospel of His mercy to the nations around you!

Conclusion: Lessons for the Marketplace of Life

1. God has a specific service planned for each of us from before our birth. We won't miss it!
2. God will initiate, orchestrate, and navigate the circumstances of that calling to us in His own time and place and by His own means!
3. That calling begins when He opens our eyes, and we see ourselves for who we truly are (sinners in need of mercy) and recognize and embrace Jesus for who He is (Savior and Lord).
4. This call to salvation and appointment to gospel service is by grace. It is initiated, sustained, and empowered by grace!
5. This calling centers on Christ and focuses on the salvation He has come to offer sinners.
6. God determines the scope of our ministry and makes it known to us by His Spirit.
7. God will unfold that calling providentially as He did with Paul.
8. This calling will require our whole life for the entirety of our life.
9. This calling involves suffering, but it leads to glory.
10. This calling will lead to lasting treasure and eternal joy. We will not waste our life when we give it to Christ for this purpose!