**The Gospel According To Righteousness**  
**Romans 1:1-7**

**Introduction**

The book of Romans is perhaps the most influential book ever written by Paul the Apostle. All Scripture is inspired by God, but few books contain the doctrinal, dispensational and practical truths in such a short space. Many of the so called "giants" of church history have savored this book as the most "meaty". The early church father Augustine was brought to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ by reading this book. He was in a garden contemplating his wickedness and weeping, some children were chanting in Latin *tolle lege*, tolle lege, which means "Take up and read". An open scroll of the book of Romans lay beside him and he picked it up. His eyes fell on the section (13:13-14) "Not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife or jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts". Martin Luther, the German monk, launched the Protestant reformation a few years after Columbus' fateful voyage to the New World. Columbus' discovery changed the world map for Europe, but Luther's discovery of Roman's changed the spiritual map of the church forever. Luther did not discover the great doctrine of salvation by grace alone in Christ alone any more than Columbus discovered America. Columbus came to a land already there! Luther came to a great doctrine already there! John Bunyan was so inspired by the great themes of Romans in the Bedford jail that he wrote *Pilgrim's Progress*.

The young John Wesley was converted to Jesus Christ as he heard someone read Luther's commentary on the book of Romans. Wesley felt his heart "strangely warmed" and became the instrument God would use to spark a great revival in the eighteenth century.

The book of Romans changed the lives of thousands of people in each generation of the Church. This book changed my life. It can change your life too. I am hoping its great themes will fill you with joy and expectation. I am hoping the book of Romans will inspire and transform you!

I encourage new Christians to read the gospel of John. I encourage discouraged Christians to read the book of Romans. I encourage people who are dry, and empty and bored to read the book of Romans. If there is one book in the New Testament every Christian should read and understand and live--it is the book of Romans! Why?

The law of diminishing returns. The more you lust for something, and the more you have that something--the less it satisfies. Sin-self-centeredness--the desire to have our own way. The ultimate goal--in many people's lives is little more than perpetual self-satisfaction. Selfishness --will eventually alienate you from everyone you love and everyone who loves you. Sin produces guilt, sin produces meaninglessness, sin produces a chain of bad news which leads to hopelessness. Millions of babies are born each year into a world filled with bad news. Someone once cynically commented--the only good
The Gospel According To Righteousness

Romans 1:1-7

thing about temporary peace—it gives everyone a chance to reload. Into a world of bad news comes—good news—the gospel of God—the gospel of righteousness—the gospel of hope—the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Let me give you some brief background of the book. Romans was written by Paul the Apostle during his three month visit to the church at Corinth (Acts 20:1-3). It has been my experience that a Pastor teaches a congregation the things God has placed on his heart. We may well assume the great doctrines Paul wrote the Romans, he taught the Corinthians. We have a clue from Romans 16:23 that two Corinthian companions may have prompted Paul's writing of this book. The letter was probably hand carried and delivered by Phoebe (16:1) who lived in a province near Corinth called Cenchrea. This was the seaport that serviced ancient Corinth. How did the church in Rome really start? Who "planted" the church? A quick glance at chapter 16 would seem to indicate there was more than one assembly (church) in Rome. One answer (without historical or scriptural foundation) is that Peter founded the church. Paul greets many people in the 16th chapter of Romans—but no Peter! It makes sense that Paul would have mentioned something in his prison epistles if someone of the stature of Peter was the senior Pastor of Calvary Chapel of Rome!

Paul was certainly anxious to minister in the great capital of the Caesars (see 1:13; 15:22-24,28,29; Acts 19:21; 23:11). This compulsion to go seems highly unlikely if Peter were already there. How did the gospel get to Rome? The most likely explanation is converts from Pentecost, Gentile converts to Judaism came to Jesus Christ. All the names in Romans 16 are Gentile and likely gravitated from other cities to Rome. Rome was the political, economic and state religious center of the world. Thousands of pilgrims and officials of every sort made regular visits to the city of the Caesars. We know from other sources that Claudius had kicked a great many Jews out of Rome. The Jews were not allowed to return until sometime later.

The whole book of Romans is a letter (commentary?) on one verse of Scripture; "The just shall live by faith" (Hab.2:4). This verse is found in Romans 1:17 (the theme of Romans is the just). These words are repeated in Galatians 3:11 (the theme of Galatians is how the just shall live) Hebrews 10:38 (the theme of Hebrews is living by faith)(see Wiersbe's Outlines in the New Testament).

Warren Wiersbe adds this wonderful insight into the book: "Romans is the first epistle in the N.T. You will note that the order of the NT letters follows 2 Timothy 3:16; "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for. . ."

Doctrine--Romans (the great doctrinal book)
Reproof--1&2 Corinthians (where Paul reproves sin)
Correction--Galatians (where Paul corrects false teaching)
Instruction in righteousness-- (Ephesians and Paul's remaining letters--Paul teaches holy living based on Christian doctrine).
The theme of this great book is righteousness. This word will appear some 40 times in one form or another throughout the book. In chapters one through three we see the demand for righteousness. In chapters three through five the declaration of righteousness. What is righteousness? The OT word is sedeq. The NT word is dikia. These are words that speak of an absolute purity of heart which leads to a purity of life. "God takes notice of clean hands, not full hands". (Latin Proverb)

Why did God abolish the law? Its standards reflected his righteousness, but the law as a system was replaced because it was powerless. It could not bring us what we desperately need-righteousness. (Erwin W. Lutzer)

The righteousness of God is his divine holiness applied in moral government and in the domain of his Laws or commands. Righteousness is linked to God's holiness--and his absolute perfection. When the Bible speaks of the righteousness of Christ it speaks not only of Jesus' absolute perfection but his perfect obedience to the law and his suffering the penalty for our sin. Righteousness speaks of the holiness, faithfulness and justice of God. The righteousness of the Law is the obedience that the Law requires (see Rom. 3:10). The righteousness of faith is the justification (which see) that is received by faith (3:21-28)(see p.1081 of the New Unger Bible Dictionary under righteousness).

The process of sanctification is just another way of describing righteousness. Israel is a picture of what happens when righteousness is rejected.

Paul's Perspective Of Himself (v.1)

In the very first verse--Paul discloses three important things about himself--his position as a servant of Jesus Christ--his authority as an apostle of Jesus Christ--and his power in being set apart for the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Paul apparently had never been to Rome before. For the most part, Paul was unknown to the saints at Rome. This is Paul's introduction of himself.

Paul uses the common form of greeting in the ancient world. He begins with his name. (Unlike phone solicitors). If a phone solicitor calls you up and says, "Hi, I'm so and so from the long distance company. I'm here to save you money. Please buy my product". You can say, "no". Some people try to trick you into thinking you have somekind of relationship with them--so you will feel obligated to buy something from them. Not Paul. Paul begins by identifying himself as a slave by choice.

Paul uses the word "doulos" (someone bound or to bind) slave or bondservant. He does not introduce himself, "Paul major heavy theological hitter, church planter extraordinare,
learned Rabbi, advanced degrees from J.U. (Jerusalem University), brilliant exegete. Paul writes, "slave of Jesus Christ". Paul knew the term carried with it a tone of abject, servile lowliness. Paul introduces the anthropology of self; servanthood. Our identity in Christ--slaves. In another place in the Bible Paul uses a different word; 1 Corinthians 4:1; "Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God".

The word 'servants' here is the Greek word which meant a galley slave--an 'underrower' the lowest of the low. Paul would have also know this was not very impressive to the average Roman reader.

If I wrote you a letter and signed it, "Gino, janitor at K-Mart". "Gino, janitor trainee at Savors". Many of the people who could read Paul's letter would have been a slave, either by circumstance or choice. Some would have been able to read and write. Others would only have been able to hear the words read to them.

The word 'janitor', 'cleaning man' 'maid' 'slave' bring images of hardship, bondage, low wages, and public aversion. Some people won't even talk to the maid who cleans the hotel room, or the janitor who cleans the toilet at Target (because they don't speak Spanish).

Paul is the slave of Jesus Christ. The key to understanding Paul's self-image is remind ourselves not just of his job "slave" but of his master the Lord Jesus Christ. The fact Paul would call himself a slave of God or a slave of Jesus Christ denotes at least two things. (1) Paul desires to live a life of subservience and subjection to the word of God and the will of God. (2) It indicates a certain relationship of devotion in which Paul is employed by God--therefore taken care of by God and completely at God's disposal.

There is an interesting paradox in using the word slave as a Christian. Christians are slaves by choice--love slaves--yet we are owned by Christ because he purchased us by his own blood.

In ancient Rome there was a group called the slaves of the Emperor. Paul was the slave of the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. Paul was freed from sin and Satan. Slavery to Christ means freedom from sin and Satan.

At the heart of his ministry is service. If we are to be productive for God we must be servants. Are you a Pastor, teacher, student, secretary, Bank President, actor, professional athlete, engineer, custodian, bus driver?

Paul considered himself "called".

Galatians 1:15-17; "But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb and called me through His grace, I might preach Him
among the Gentiles, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went to Arabia, and returned again to Damascus".

"Grace comes before apostleship, salvation before service. Jesus says, "Come to me" before he says, "Go into the world". Commitment to the truth comes before commitment to the task. Many well meaning people have failed to see this. John Wesley was on his way to the mission field before discovering he himself was an unconverted man in need of a Savior" (see John Phillips p. 16)

called to be an apostle' or 'sent one' or sent on a mission, envoy, ambassador.

Paul was not a self-appointed apostle. Paul was separated, "set-apart" for the gospel. The word "set-apart" or separated means 'set off by boundaries' or set apart for a special service. Paul was keenly aware he was set aside--set apart--all other pursuits in life were subordinate to this one pursuit. This sense of calling must grip every preacher, every minister, but I believe it must also grip every Christian. All Christians are set apart by God for His purposes. You are holy.

The person truly called to the ministry will not be content to do anything else other than teach and preach Christ. The preacher must have an inescapable conviction that he is called and separated by God to this special purpose.

When things got difficult, Paul would often reflect on the fact that God called him to the ministry. God summoned him. The difficult circumstances did not come because he missed the mark or misunderstood God's calling, but rather because he was faithful and was fulfilling God's purposes in his life.

At the core of Paul's identity, at the core of his being, he knew he was doing what God had called him to do! What a comfort! What a motivation!

Do you know in your heart of hearts and soul of souls you are a called messenger of God? You are the bearer of God's love and grace? Have you been infected with the contagion of the Holy Spirit and bear life in your being?

Three Keys to Self-Image
Servanthood
Calling
Set-Apart

How would Paul answer the question, "Who are you?" I am Paul, a bond-servant of Jesus Christ, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God. How would you answer the question--who are you? Servant, called, set-apart.
Paul's Prospects For Preaching (v.2-4)
We are now introduced to Paul's view of preaching. The gospel was no theological novelty. Paul did not make up the gospel. It was contained in the Old Testament scriptures.

"which He promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures".

(vv.3-4) Ask a conservative--was Jesus human or divine? He might say, "divine". Napolean said, "I know men. Jesus was no man." Ask a liberal, he might say, "Jesus was a good man, possibly even the best man. But he was a man." Both answers are right and both answers are wrong. The right answer is 'both'. Jesus is God and Man. As Hank Hanegraff is fond of saying, "he is theoanthropos" the God-Man.

Please note carefully in verses 3 and 4 that Jesus is both human and divine. Jesus Christ is God's Son. Verse 3 stresses his humanity. The Greek expression here is ek spermatos from the very seed of David (David's DNA). Verse 4 equally declares or stresses his divinity. The resurrection did not 'make' Jesus the Son of God. Jesus was the Son of God before time began. He is eternally God. The resurrection only revealed what was already true--Jesus is God.

The story is told of M. Lepeau who complained to Talleyrand that a new religion of his, allegedly a great improvement over Christianity--had failed to catch on with the people. He asked Talleyrand for some suggestions. "To insure success for your new religion, M. Lepeau, all you need to do is to have yourself crucified and then rise from the dead on the third day!" The resurrection "declared" that Jesus was the Son of God.

Paul wanted the Romans to know the "gospel of God" (v.1) according to the ancient Jewish Scriptures was to preach Jesus, as the divine/human resurrected Savior.

Paul's Persuasion Concerning His Commission (v.5)

(v.5) Verse 5 tells us Paul's view of his own calling, or commission by Jesus Christ. When a person becomes an officer in the military he or she is said to be given a commission or rank by the governing authority of the military.

Jesus has made Paul an officer in Christ's army. Paul did not graduate from a military academy or fight a battle in order to gain credentials. Jesus ordained him. Jesus ordained Paul by grace. Paul is using the word grace in the grandest, widest possible fashion. Grace here means salvation, wisdom, illumination and the power to serve. Grace was used by the ancient Greeks to describe favor, sweetness, by a superior person to an inferior person. Then it came to mean favor, goodwill. Finally it became undeserved favor. The word charis appears some 160 times in the NT and means Grace is a subject that Paul never tired of nor did he cease to speak of it. The New Testament writers uses
**The Gospel According To Righteousness**

**Romans 1:1-7**

the word to describe the unearned or unmerited favor God lavishes on ill-deserving sinners the pardon of their offenses, and bids them accept eternal salvation through Jesus Christ the Lord. When Paul says, "we have received grace" he means God's wonderful favor, shown or demonstrated in salvation.

1 Timothy 1:15-16; "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.16 However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life".

Paul reminds us that grace changed his life.

Know wonder Chuck Smith calls this epistle the "Gospel according to Grace". Karl Barth said, "Only when grace is recognized to be incomprensible is it grace." It is kind of ironic, those who think they understand the love and grace of God are quite possibly without it! Paul has told the Romans what he wants them to know about him. He is a servant. He is God-appointed not self-appointed. The whole of his life is dominated by this subject of the divine/human; human/divine Jesus.

**Paul's Purposes For The Roman Brethren (vv.6-7)**

(vv.6-7) After Paul has spoken of his commission--he talks about their calling--they are called to be Saints!

Paul reminds the Romans they are the 'called of Jesus Christ'. Paul begins--not with the Roman's love for God, but rather God's love for the Romans.

"beloved of God" (well loved).

"saints" hagioi (holy ones). The expression occurs some 200 times in the New Testament. About 60 of those times it used as a substantive and is rendered saints. He calls us holy ones. Does holy mean--perfect--sanctified--glorified? There is an element of that meaning. Does it mean set apart? Yes. It describes both people and things that are set apart for God. Since those things that are dedicated to God must be pure--it also included the idea of without spot, blemish or stain.

We are to become holy, set apart, more and more like the God we serve.

**Conclusion**

God is calling from this world--from this culture--from this country--a select society of people called "the church". The world translated church in the New Testament is ecclesia--an assembly of called-out ones". These called out ones are called Saints.
The Catholic church uses this as a technical term to describe someone officially canonized by the church. Paul uses the term in a general sense to describe all believers.

The word saint--is not a special class of people in the church--but rather it describes everyone who is called out of the world and into the church!

This means you have been 'set apart for God'.

Sanctified--Set Apart --For Service--By God.

If there is righteousness in the heart, there will be beauty in character. If there is beauty in character, there will be harmony in the home. If there is harmony in the home, there will be order in the nation. If there is order in the nation, there will be peace in the world.

-- Chinese proverb