He became what we are, to make us what He is.
Irenaeus, second-century Bishop of Lyons

ROMANS CHAPTER ONE
Prayer Study # 441
First Love Ministries, Inc. of Perry, Georgia USA

Romans 1 - New King James Version (NKJV)

Greeting

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.*

I believe the ultimate goal to which every Christian should aspire is to be a bond slave of Jesus Christ. Paul is not merely saying words here. He has proven over and over with his life that he sincerely and genuinely is a bond servant or bond slave. There are others in the New Testament that also took this title. This is not meant to be a comprehensive list, but among them are Simeon in Luke 2:29 who recognized the baby Jesus as the Christ in the Temple; James (James 1:1), who was head of the Church in Jerusalem, and Jude (Jude 1:1), both of whom Protestants believe were the half-brothers of Jesus; Timothy (Philippians 1:1); Peter (2nd Peter 1:1-12); and, of course, Paul (Titus 1:1, Philippians 1:1, Romans 1:1). In addition, the Apostle John wrote the book of Revelation to the bond slaves of Jesus Christ.

Even in the Old Testament, which was written in Hebrew, there were bond slaves. The Hebrew word translated as *servant* in Joshua 1:1 really means Moses was the bond slave of God. This is repeated in Joshua 24:29 when Joshua was also referred to as the *servant* of God. To the prophets, there was no great honor than being a bond slave to God (Amos 3:7, Jeremiah 7:25).

The word *doulos* is the Greek word translated either bond servant or bond slave. The meaning of a bond slave or bond servant of Christ is: One who has a complete and utter devotion to Jesus to the disregard of his or her own interest. This calls for the bond slave to love as Christ loved, walk as Christ walked, stay strong when you, as a bond

slave, are weak and have nothing left, to completely obey His word and His will, and to seek God first, above all else. Bond slaves have absolutely no rights. In the Jewish culture slaves could only be enslaved for so many years. When their period of enslavement ended, they were free to go. Bond slaves, however, loved their masters so much that they gave themselves to the master so that they could continue the rest of their lives to serve the master. To make this official so that everyone would know instantly who these people were, the master had the bond slave place his ear lobe on the door facing and the master knocked a big hole in the ear lobe with a punch.

Do you think that Paul is qualified to be a bond slave? Let's just look at what He suffered in service to the Master as a bond slave with no real rights (2nd Corinthians 4 and other places):

1. Endurance and patience needed with people
2. Pressure and tribulation as a vise
3. Hardships, lack of what is needed
4. Distress, calamities
5. Bodily beaten, suffering injury
6. Imprisoned unjustly
7. Rioting as a result of the message the Lord gave him to speak
8. Laboring tirelessly
9. Sleepless nights in prayer
10. Hunger with no food available
11. Being innocent and pure but accused of the opposite
12. Having knowledge and spiritual insight but ignored when sharing it
13. Showing patience and kindness but not repaid in kind
14. Having genuine love for people with no attempt to use them, yet they use him
15. Speaking truth and being hated for it
16. Being defamed with untrue, evil reports being spread about you
17. Branded as a deceiver
18. Treated as a nobody but known by God and His genuine people
19. So full of anguish at times that he felt that he was dying
20. Chastened but not killed
21. Full of grieve and mourning because of the world's reaction to the Gospel message
22. Poor but giving others riches
23. Having few physical possessions
24. Beaten to the point of death
25. Head cut off because of following Jesus

Note that the Resurrection was what sealed Jesus' position as the Son of God, that power was connected to holiness, and apostleship was connected to obedience of the faith.

Paul says that he received two gifts from the Lord. First is grace. Grace is totally unmerited, unearned, absolutely free favor. In times past, Paul was a Pharisee of the Pharisees. The Pharisees tried to earn favor with God by keeping the most minute part of the law. Salvation, therefore, cannot be earned in any way, and does not depend on what man can do, but depends on what God's love has done. Mankind must receive Jesus in their hearts, but salvation is not based on works but on grace.

Paul also received a task, or apostleship. God had set him apart not for special honor but for special responsibility. This was, in other words, a job-to bring the Gospel to the Gentiles. This was abhorrent to the Jews who saw the Gentiles as fuel for the fires of hell. Many today like the term *apostle* attached to their name. Many are truly called by God to this office, but many are not and just like the recognition.

We discussed last week about the fact that the Church at Rome was not centralized in one place. Apparently, there were many fellowships meeting in the city. This was certainly practical since Rome had a population estimated at between one and four million people, and I am sure there was always a host of visitors in the city making it more crowded and less easy to get around.

Desire to Visit Rome

8 *First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.* ***9*** *For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of His Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers,* ***10*** *making request if, by some means, now at last I may find a way in the will of God to come to you.* ***11*** *For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, so that you may be established—* ***12*** *that is, that I may be encouraged together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me.*
13 *Now I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that I often planned to come to you (but was hindered until now), that I might have some fruit among you also, just as among the other Gentiles.* ***14*** *I am a debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to wise and to unwise.* ***15*** *So, as much as is in me, I am ready to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome also.*

Here is Paul with his heart beating with great love for a church and people he has never seen. He had never even visited the city of Rome, but William Barclay says that, nevertheless, Paul believed in these Christians and also constantly prayed for them. Barclay writes, "No one can ever even begin to save men and women without first believing in them. We are all hell-deserving sinners, but we have also a dormant strength

and courage within our souls, and often a word of praise will awaken that sleeping heroism when criticism and condemnation will only produce resentment and despair." As for prayer, that is one of the most powerful weapons we have. Also, *praying* is one of the most loving gestures that we can do for people, and we can pray for people even if they are on the other side of the world.

And what greater compliment can we give a Christian body than to say with sincerity that their faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.

At first Paul mentions that he is coming to impart some spiritual gift to them. Then he turns this around in humility to say that the Romans can give to him also, and they and he can encourage each other in the faith.

Why would Paul talk of the Greeks if he was writing a letter to Rome? The explanation is simple. Greek had lost its racial and country connotations because Alexander the Great had taken the Greek language and Greek thought all over the world. To refer to someone as a Greek was to say that they were educated and refined, not that they were natives of Greece.

In these last verses Paul is saying that his message, the message of the Gospel, is to rich and poor, refined, and uncultured, educated, and uneducated people.

The Just Live by Faith

16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. **17** For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith."

These two verses are two of most significant verses in the New Testament. To say that the Gospel is for both Jews and Greeks was a very radical statement. Because of Paul's desire to share the faith with non-Jews, he was persecuted. Barclay writes of verse 17: "Paul had been imprisoned in Philippi, chased out of Thessalonica, smuggled out of Beroea and laughed at in Athens, and In Corinth his message was foolishness to the Greeks and a stumbling-block to the Jews. Out of that background, he declared that he was proud of the gospel. There was something in the gospel which made Paul triumphantly victorious over all that anyone could do to him."

Verse 17 contains part of a verse from Habukkah 2:4: *Behold the proud. His soul is not upright in him; but the just shall live by faith.* First, I want to give you a little background on Habukkah because we are living in very similar times. The nation of Israel was called to repentance over and over but refused stubbornly to change its sinful

ways. Habukkah struggled in his faith because he did not understand why God would allow the nation to flagrantly violate His laws and go unpunished. When God revealed His intention to use Babylon to punish the nation, Habukkah is even more troubled, because Babylon was even more sinful than Judah. God gives Habukkah understanding, and although he is still terrified about a possible Babylon invasion, he comes to a point where he not only trusts the Lord but also praises Him when he has a vision of the Glory of the Person of God.

We discussed the meaning of justification last week. Basically, we are justified by the Blood of Jesus and God incredibly looks on us just as if we had never sinned. This little phrase in Habukkuk 2:4 and repeated by Paul in Romans 1:17, started the Protestant Reformation when the priest, Martin Luther, suddenly had the revelation that we are not justified by our works or by paying indulgences and going to confession, but we are justified by faith in the power of the Blood of Jesus.

God's Wrath on Unrighteousness

18 *For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,* ***19*** *because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them.* ***20*** *For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse,* ***21*** *because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.* ***22*** *Professing to be wise, they became fools,* ***23*** *and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.*

24 *Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves,* ***25*** *who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.*

26 *For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature.* ***27*** *Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due.*

28 *And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting;* ***29*** *being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality,[c] wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers,* ***30*** *backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents,*

31 *undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving,[d] unmerciful;* ***32*** *who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.*

The wrath of God is God's holy anger. It is God's consistent and constant displeasure with evil. God is merciful, but He is not lenient. He is merciful because of what Jesus did on the cross. Ungodliness is that which is against God. I am afraid today that we live in an ungodly nation, and certainly an ungodly world, and the nations will incur the wrath of God. Paul also speaks of the wrath of God in Ephesians 5:6 and Colossians 3:6. In these two passages he is talking about the wrath of God coming upon the children of disobedience.

In verses 19-23, Paul is saying that people cannot pled ignorance of God because it has always been possible to see what He is like from looking at the world He created and the beauty of that world. People who, instead of looking out to God, but looking into themselves, come up with futile speculations and make their own ideas and their own opinions the standard and law of life, instead of considering the will of God and the Word of God. Thus, they live in a self-centered, instead of God-centered, universe. This is nothing but idolatry. The glory of God was exchanged for images of human and animal forms. In summary, sin is, in essence, putting self in place of God.

In verses 24-32, we see the results of Gentile guilt. People left out God in their lives and lived for forbidden pleasure, doing nameless and shameless things. Becoming so involved in the seeking of pleasure and worldly things, they are no longer even aware of God and His pull on their hearts.

God gave us free will and will not violate our wills. A sad illustration of this is found in the Old Testament book of Hosea in 4:17, "*Ephraim is joined to idols-let him alone*." If people deliberately turn away to God, after He has sent His Son to die for us, then even He will not do anything about it. We all know that the more we sin, the easier and less convicting it becomes. We grieve the Holy Spirit, and God turns His back on us. One terrible thing about sin is that it is a lie. Sinners think it will make them happy. Instead, sin, in the end, ruins their lives and the lives of others in this life and in the world to come.

The final situation in Paul's day was the greatest lack of morals (until perhaps this current day) in the history of the world, even the non-Christian Roman writers of the day were decrying the violence, the sense of everything being out of control, the wars, the immorality, the blood-thirstiness, etc. Livy, the historian wrote of this day, "I see Rome, proud Rome, perishing, the victim of her own prosperity." In the first 520 years of the history of the Roman Empire, there had not been a single case of divorce. During the time Paul wrote this letter, divorce was rampart with women dating the years by the names of

their husbands whom they had divorce and then remarried someone else. Also, crime was at an all-time high.

Paul gives characteristics of the then Roman society and the now Western World society. The people did not give God His rightful place, and man believed he was self-sufficient. They were not grateful, which 2nd Timothy 3 tells us, will be a characteristic of the last days. They came up with false doctrines. A good example in our day is the theory of evolution. They moved into the darkness of paganism. They thought they were wise but were fools. The culmination of man's revolution against God was found in sex perversion of all kinds. They began to worship the creature-in our day the human body-more than the Creator. J. Vernon McGee speaks of this kind of lifestyle, "Anybody who tells me that he can be a child of God and live in perversion, live in the thick of our contemporary permissiveness, is not kidding anyone but himself. [But] If he will come to Christ, he can have deliverance."

Paul is given us a picture of what happens when a culture abandons God and lives in a degenerate way. In the end Rome perished, and I sadly say that I believe the greatness of America is going to perish soon too, if we do not return to our Christian roots. I believe many in our country have passed the line of no return.

OVER AND OVER

Vs 1. I stood at the banks of a wide raging river, Trusting that I'd get across.
I've made my way through valleys and deserts, Believing I'd never get lost.
I've stood at the foot of what felt like mount Everest, Knowing I'd have the strength for the climb.
But through every trial, each test, temptation,
There's one thing sure every time.

CHORUS
Over, and over. Again, and again God is faithful. Over, and over, again, and again through it all, He's made me able.
To stand and survive, to come through alive,
When it sure looks like I wouldn't win.
Jesus is with me, so I'll claim the victory.
Over, and over again.

Vs 2. If you ask me why, I have no hesitation; God does what He says He will do. I'd simply say every battle has taught me, there's nothing He wont help me through. So why should I dwell on the hardships and struggles, when I look just beyond them I see. The way this will end in a great celebration, deep in my heart I believe.