



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.

I am not a fan of tattoos. I wonder what some of these athletes with head to toe tattoos are going to look like when they are 85 years old. I am not a fan of them but neither do I condemn them. But I did see a guy last Friday with a tattoo that read “Sola Fide: which means “only faith” or “by faith alone.” With this foundation of sola fide, I want to ask four basic questions to start us off in our first morning in the book of Romans.

1. Who are we?
2. What is the Bible?
3. Who is Jesus?
4. What is faith?

These may seem like simple questions but we should never take the most basic tenets of our faith for granted. William Haslem is a good example of this. In 1850 he was a small town pastor in southwest England. Even though he was an ordained minister and preached from the Bible every Sunday, he was an unconverted man. This is no surprise is, after hearing about Wesley and Luther last week. In fact, Haslem’s story sounds remarkably similar to theirs’.



“I got moreover, into a legal state, and thought my acceptance with God depended upon my works, and that His future favour would result upon my faithfulness and attention to works of righteousness which I was going. This made me very diligent in prayer, fasting and almsdeeds ... I took it for granted that I was a child of God, because I had been baptised and brought into the Church and having been confirmed and admitted to the Lord's Table, I concluded that I was safely on the way to heaven.”

One Sunday morning in 1851, he stood up in the pulpit to preach from Matthew 22:41-42—*Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them a question, saying, “What do you think about the Christ? Whose son is he?”*

Something was telling me, all the time, 'You are no better than the Pharisees. You do not believe He has come to save you any more than they did.' I do not remember all I said, but I felt a wonderful light and joy coming into my soul, and I was beginning to see what the Pharisees did not. Whether it was in my words, or my manner, or my look, I know not; but all of a sudden, a local preacher, who happened to be in the congregation, stood up, and putting up his arms, shouted out in Cornish fashion, "The parson is converted! The parson is converted! Hallelujah!" In another moment his voice was lost in the shouts and praises of three or four hundred of the congregation. Instead of rebuking this extraordinary 'brawling' as I should have done in former time, I joined in the outbreak of praise, and then gave out the Doxology - "Praise God from whom all blessings flow", and the people sang it over and over again.

Did you catch that Rev. Haslam asked one of these questions—who is Jesus? These four questions are a theme of the entire book of Romans and we will visit them again and again in different forms. My prayer is that before we are done, men and women, boys and girls—either those here now or those who will yet come—will be converted. I don't care if it happens during the message, after the message or despite the message, I pray that the powerful message of this letter will help to bring about the conversion of many. I also pray that the rest of us will be slowly simmered in its transforming message and life for us will never be the same as a result of having looked deeply into it.

1. Who are we? We are slaves of Jesus

In the first verse, Paul told us who he was. Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus... Is that what your translation has? The majority of the translations use the word servant.

Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus (ESV, NIV, KJV, RSV)

And by the way, whatever it is that Paul is, so are we. So Paul's a servant and therefore we are servants of Christ, but that is not really what it means. But look at how the NASB translates this verse.

Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus (NASB)

Bondservant is a little stronger word than servant, wouldn't you agree? A bond-servant is a person who is bound to another. A bondservant falls somewhere in between a servant and a slave. But it is vital to know that the Greek word translated as servant and bondservant is *doulos*. Here is a definition of that word.

All the words in this group serve either to describe the status of a slave or an attitude corresponding to that of a slave. "slave, a "female slave," "to be a slave," "to stand in the relationship of a slave," "slavery," a "fellow-slave," "enslaved" or "performing the service of a slave." The meaning is so unequivocal and self-contained that it is superfluous to give examples of the individual terms or to trace the history of the group.¹

It would appear that all of our translations have it wrong. This word ought to be translated the way that the Holman Bible does.

Paul, a slave of Christ Jesus (HCSB)

All translations leave the word slave in Romans 6:18—*and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness*. If we are slaves to righteousness then we are slaves to Christ. You may not like the sound of this word but think about what makes a slave, a slave. A slave is purchased, right? Now of course our minds immediately go to the thoughts and images of an actual slave being purchased in the slave states of our sinful American history. For a moment, set aside how slaves were treated and come to rest on the idea of a slave is one who is purchased. This is exactly the way the Bible describes believers.

1 Cor. 6:19-20—*You are not your own, for you were bought with a price.*

Acts 20:28—*Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.*

1 Peter 1:18-19—*knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.*

If we were purchased, then what does that make us? This answers our first question: who are we? We are slaves of Christ. We like to be called children of God. We enjoy our status as the Lord's beloved but I think we shy away from this part of our identity—as a slave of Christ. This is understandable since slavery in every age is an abominable practice. Justice and common decency tells us that it is wrong for one person to "own" another, and certainly it is—with this one exception. Jesus owns us. He is our master. Seeing yourself as a slave of Christ is the foundation of all discipleship.

It's just like what happened with Boaz and Ruth. *Also Ruth the Moabite...I have bought to be my wife* (Ruth 4:10). Boaz paid a price for the land and for his wife. He purchased her but his motivation was love. Christ purchased us but his motivation was love. We know this from dozens of Scriptures that speak of his love for us but we also know it because the purchase price

was the precious blood of Christ. There is no higher price in all of the universe. There are no words to describe its infinite worth.

As a slave, then, our job is to do the will of our master. We see this in James 4:13-15—*Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit”—yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. Instead you ought to say, “If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that.”*

John MacArthur comments on this passage saying, “That’s slave talk. That’s what it means to be subject to an alien will.”² If you think this somehow diminishes your identity or personhood, do not forget that this is exactly how Jesus related to the Father. *Jesus said to them, “My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work.”* (John 4:34).

As a slave of Christ, our will must bend to his. That’s the way we serve our Master. That’s the way we show love toward our Master. This is not some impersonal relationship where the Master orders us around to fulfill his selfish desires. If he gives us a command it is because, as our Master and Heavenly Father, it is best for us. Out of all possible decisions, doing his will is always the best thing for us as well as for him.

If you see yourself as a slave, several applications will follow.

1. You don’t get everything you want or even think you need. God is not your divine vending machine in the sky waiting to give you precisely what you want and hold you back from all trials and sorrows. You don’t get everything you want but you will get the Master’s will for your life.
2. If your role as a slave is to do the will of your Master, then you need to be busy learning His will for you, and that starts between the pages of the book you are holding.
3. You get to continually meditate on the fact that you were brought under the domain of your Master by being purchased with the precious blood of Christ. You can’t be bought by the blood of Christ and be a nobody. This fact gives you intrinsic worth. Not that Jesus purchased you because you were valuable but his purchase of you is what gives you value and infinite worth.

2. What is the Bible?

Paul said that he was *set apart for the gospel of God, which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures*. One thing you can’t help but notice as you read through the book of Romans is the number of Old Testament quotes that Paul used. I counted a total of 51 but I probably missed a few. I will continue to keep a tally and correct that number as I can. Here is a chart of the quotations.

Psalms	13
Isaiah	13
Deuteronomy	6
Exodus	4
Genesis	3
Proverbs	3
Hosea	2
1 Kings	2
Malachi	1
2 Samuel	1
Habakkuk	1
Leviticus	1
Joel	1

More than half come from the Psalms and Isaiah and a good mix of eleven other books. The list can be simplified by combining the books into four categories.

Psalms/Proverbs	16
Torah	14
History	3

Since David wrote most of the references in psalms and Moses wrote the Torah, the list can be simplified even further.

However, since Moses was considered to be a prophet: *And there has not arisen a prophet since in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face* (Deut. 34:10) and

Prophets	18
Moses	14
David	10
TOTAL	42

since David was also a prophet in his own right: *Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne, he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption.* (Acts 2:29-31), this means that when Paul wrote, *the gospel of God, which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures*, he was not just referring to the quotations from the prophets but basically from every OT quote that he used.

What does all of this mean? If you just go by actual numbers, the OT quotations make up a little less than 10% of the entire book of Romans. That by itself is pretty significant but the influence of the Old Testament on this letter is far more than that. For example, chapter 5 does not have a single OT quote but the entire chapter is built upon Genesis 3—Adam’s sin which leads to Christ’s redemption. The entire time Paul wrote chapter five he had Genesis chapter three in mind. Genesis 3 permeated Romans 5. This basic process repeats itself all throughout the book. I think it is safe to say that at least half of Romans is dependent upon and built upon the Old Testament. Several applications flow from this.

1. Understand the Bible as a unified message about Jesus Christ. We are told that this is true but as we go through Romans we will see again how it all fits together. What would you say is the theme of the entire Bible? In one word, the theme is Jesus. The Old Testament looks forward to his first coming. The gospels tell of his first coming and the rest of the new Testament looks back on his first coming and forward to his second coming. The whole Bible is about Jesus therefore as you read the Old Testament you should find glimpses and foreshadowing of Jesus throughout.
2. Know your OT better. Let’s face it. Most of us tend to shy away from the Old Testament. “Let’s see—should I read the gospel of John or 2 Chronicles? Hmm. Should I read Numbers or Romans?” Assuming you do regularly read your Bible, we almost always choose the easier and more familiar book. I recommend you have a reading plan that does not skip over the Old Testament books.

3. Because of this, as Paul guides us, we will be delving back into the Old Testament as we work our way through Romans. When I preached through Genesis I spent a fair amount of time in the NT, so as we work through Romans we will spend a fair amount of time in the OT.

3. Who is Jesus?

According to verses 3-4, Jesus is described as both fully God and fully man.

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,

These verses can be broken down like this.

Fully Man	Fully God
descended	declared
from David	to be the Son of God in power
according to the flesh	according to the Spirit of holiness
	by his resurrection from the dead

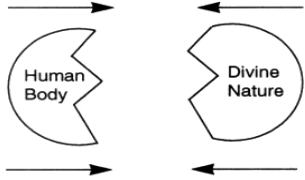
It's been a few weeks not but do you remember the last word in the book of Ruth? The last word is "David." A driving theme in Ruth is the genealogy of King David, the forerunner of Christ. Jesus literally was descended from David. Matthew goes a little further and traces his genealogy back to Abraham and Luke goes the furthest of all and traces his genealogy back to Adam.



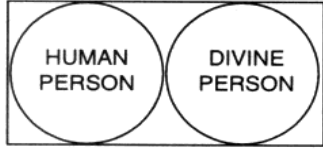
Jesus Christ was 100% human. But he was also declared to be the Son of God in power. Now don't get thrown off by the word declared. It's not as if he wasn't really God and then after his resurrection everyone declared, "Look, he's the Son of God!" The declaration of his deity did not make him God but merely announced the fact that he is God and always has been God.

A few weeks ago along lost landscape painting by Vincent Van Gogh was discovered in an attic in Norway.³ You know how those Norwegians are—always hording treasures! The art experts obviously took great time in examining the painting for authenticity and eventually declared it to be a genuine Van Gogh. It will no doubt be sold for untold millions of dollars at an art auction. But when they declared it to be the real thing, their official declaration did not take an average painting and make it a Van Gogh. It was always a Van Gogh and their declaration of authenticity merely announced that it was the real thing. In the same way, Jesus victorious resurrection from the dead did not make him divine but it loudly and clearly announced that he was divine.

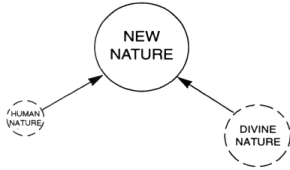
Jesus was and is both fully God and fully man. If you want a fancy word attached to it, it is called the hypostatic union—the union of Jesus two natures—his humanity and his deity.



There are several incorrect ways to view the two natures of Christ. Over the centuries, some have described it as kind of two halves coming together to equal a whole. This would make Jesus half man and half God, kind of a variation of the children of Greek gods.

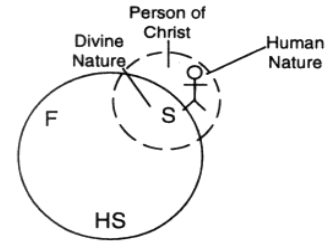


Other descriptions maintain that Jesus is fully man and fully God but do not make them into one person so you end up with two separate people, not one.



Others tried to correct the problem of two persons by taking Jesus' human nature and his divine nature and creating a third and totally new nature. This has the benefit of unity but does not maintain the separate and distinct human and divine natures.

A better solution is to understand Jesus as fully God and the second member of the Trinity united in one person with his human nature. While there is no perfect illustration or diagram, this one has the benefit of maintaining both the distinct two natures and his full unity.⁴



We see both natures fully described in the New Testament.

Jesus as Man	Jesus as God
He worshipped the Father—John 17	He is worshipped—Matt 2:2,11
He prayed to the Father—John 17	He is prayed to—Acts 7:59
He was tempted—Matt 4	He is sinless—Heb 4:15
He grew in wisdom—Luke 2:52	He knows all things—John 21:17
He died—Rom. 5:8	He gives eternal life—John 10:28
He has a body of flesh and bones—Luke 24:39	All the fullness of the deity dwells in him—Col. 2:9 ⁵

Without his humanity he could not have been our substitute on the cross but without his deity he could not have been the sinless Savior. Without his humanity he could not be tempted in every way as we are but without his deity he would not be sitting on the throne of grace waiting for us to come and receive mercy and grace in our time of need.

The song we sang earlier is a great example of how we should respond to this truth.

Meekness and majesty manhood and deity
 In perfect harmony the Man who is God
 Lord of eternity dwells in humanity
 Kneels in humility and washes our feet

O what a mystery meekness and majesty
 Bow down and worship for this is your God
 This is your God

Our response to the meekness and majesty of Jesus is worship—bow down and worship, for this is your God.

4. What is faith?

Verse five helps to answer our last question: *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.*

We are not only asking, what is faith? But also what is this phrase, the obedience of faith? Are we to have faith or are we to obey? How does faith and obedience go together?

Romans 4 tells us how Abraham was justified.

For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. 3 For what does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness.”

In no uncertain terms, Paul made it clear that Abraham was not justified by works but by faith. However, James appears to say the opposite. *Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar?* (James 2:21). The skeptic would look at these two verses and claim there is a major contradiction, that 2 NT authors completely disagree with one another. But James goes on to say, *You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works; 23 and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness”—and he was called a friend of God.*

Is it faith or obedience? Yes. Abraham obeyed by faith and his faith produced obedience. Without obedience there could not have been any faith. It is faith that justifies but it is the work that justifies—or proves, if you will—the faith. Practically speaking, if you have faith, you will have works. That’s the beauty and power of it all. Don’t think of it like this: If I have faith I must produce good works. That is wrong and falls right back into legalism and struggle. Instead, see it like this: If I have faith, good works will be produced through me. We don’t do the good works so much as we are the passive recipients of the Spirit’s work which produces the good works through us. To go back to the earlier example of the Van Gogh painting—we are the paintbrush and the Holy Spirit is the painter. This is the obedience of faith—the obedience and good works which necessarily flows from faith.

This brings us full circle back to our identity as slaves of Christ. As slaves of Christ, we cannot help but want to obey our Master. His will, will be our will. Not must be, but will be. Jesus said, “If you love me you will keep my commandments.” He did not say, “If you love me, you must keep my commandments.” The obedience flows from true love in the same way that obedience flows from true faith. I am not suggesting that it does not take effort or that we will instantly be brought into a life of sinless perfection. But I am saying that every act of obedience is itself an act of faith.

Here is a summary of our four questions.

1. Who are we? → We are slaves of Christ.
2. What is the Bible? → The Bible is a unified message about Jesus Christ.
3. Who is Jesus? → Jesus is fully and fully God.

4. What is faith? → Faith brings obedience through the power of the Spirit.

I want you to answer the following question and take this home with you this afternoon. “By faith, I will _____.” What will you do by faith this week? You don’t have to go to the mission field because you have faith. That may be one natural result of having faith but it is not necessary. Can you love your wife or husband by faith? By faith, can you exhibit more patience to your kids? By faith, can you not look at pornography? Please make this your prayer this week. “Father, by faith I will _____.”

Rich Maurer
September 22, 2013

¹ . Vol. 2: *Theological dictionary of the New Testament*. 1964- (G. Kittel, G. W. Bromiley & G. Friedrich, Ed.) (electronic ed.) (261). Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

² <http://www.gty.org/resources/sermons/80-321>

³ <http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2013/sep/09/van-gogh-painting-discovered>

⁴ All diagrams taken from: Grudem, W. A. (2004). *Systematic theology: An introduction to biblical doctrine*. Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; Zondervan Pub. House.

⁵ <http://carm.org/dictionary-hypostatic-union>