LIFE BIBLE MINISTRY

Romans (Part 1) :1-17

Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus

Pastor Paul LeBoutillier · May 24, 2026

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

Romans chapter one, open your Bible there please. Romans chapter one. The book of Romans is one of these books that I like to say you gotta put your hip waders on when you tackle this book because there's some deep stuff here. You know, there's things in Romans that we are still trying to figure out. The book of Romans is essentially divided into two sections.

You have the first 11 chapters which are a theological treatise that is second to none, frankly, in the Bible. And then from that point on after that, chapter 12 and forward, it's really just a lot of practical sort of information and exhortations and so forth from the Apostle Paul. And I believe that if you determine to stick with this study all the way from beginning to end, you're going to come away with a heightened understanding of the redemptive plan of God as it relates to our salvation. And there are just so many wonderful things, but I wanna remind you something. When you get to the end of chapter 11, and again, Paul has just, he has just developed in those first 11 chapters some of the most amazing theological insights that can be known by people this side of heaven.

But he ends that chapter by saying that who can know? He basically, I'm paraphrasing here, he basically says how incredible is the wisdom of God beyond knowing. And so we come at this book, this study of the book of Romans with hearts of humility, hearts that long to receive from God, but hearts that want to hear his voice through the midst of this, amen? We're going to read, we're actually gonna study down through verse 17. Well, at least we're gonna do our best to get that far.

Let me say that. It all depends on how fast you guys listen. But, we're gonna begin by reading the first seven verses, and then I'll open up in prayer, okay? So, by the way, Troy gave me permission to teach from the ESV, even though most of you guys probably have a New King James. You're gonna find that this is not a wild departure from the New King James at all.

So if that's what you have on your lap, you won't have any trouble following along. But anyway, here we go. We're gonna read the first seven verses. It says, Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an

apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures, concerning his son, who was descended from David according to the flesh, 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, 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, including you, who are called to belong to Jesus Christ. 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'm gonna have you stop there. Let's pray together. Father God, as we dig into your word this evening, we declare tonight that you are the teacher here in the room, and we are the students. We long to hear you. We long to be open, Lord.

So give us spiritual receptivity. Open our spiritual eyes. Open our spiritual ears. Help us to tune into your heart, to your spirit tonight. We look to you, Father, to do this.

In the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior, amen, amen. This letter begins as letters did back in that time with the sender's name first. It's exactly the opposite of the way we do things today. We start off saying dear so-and-so, and then we get to the end of the letter, and you sign your name. Well, that's easy when you're printing on pages that you can quickly leaf through, but typically, these letters were written on scrolls, and it would be very inconvenient to have to roll the whole thing to get to the end and say, oh, it's from Paul, and then roll it back up again and then read the letter.

And so this is why these letters at this time began with the name of the writer, and you'll notice here in the ESV, it begins by saying Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus. However, this is one rendering where I do prefer the New King James, because in your Bible, if that's what you have on your lap, it says Paul, a bond servant of Jesus Christ, which is, I think, a better rendering of the Greek word that is used here, which is doulos. And some translations actually render this word as slave. It could be servant, slave, or bond servant, or even bond slave would be accurate, because doulos was a servant slave who had chosen to stay with his master out of love. It was someone who had been a slave and a servant.

And of course, when you think about slavery, please don't think about slavery from the historical standpoint of the United States of America. And frankly, the way we did slaves, typically slaves in biblical times were individuals who had gotten themselves into debt, and they had to work off that debt to whomever they owed the money to. And this is the way it was with, specifically with Jewish servant slaves, if you will. But even a Jewish servant slave could be a doulos. And this is all explained in the book of Deuteronomy, believe it or not in the Old Testament.

Let me put this on the screen and we can read it together from Deuteronomy chapter 15. It says, if your brother, a Hebrew man or Hebrew woman is sold to you, he shall serve you six years. And in the seventh year, you shall let him go free from you. But if he says to you, I will not go out from you because he loves you and your household, since he is well off with you, then you shall take an awl and put it through his ear into the door and he shall be your slave together. And so it was kind of like an ear piercing, I suppose, which gives me the willies, frankly, in both ears.

And some of you women who have a lot of piercings, you're like, you're a weenie, but I can imagine. I mean, they literally would back him up to the door frame and drive the awl through his ear, which would signify that he was a doulos, a servant slave for life. Why? Because he loved his master. Well, here's the point.

Paul called himself a doulos. He basically is starting off this letter by saying, Paul, a lifelong loving servant of Jesus. Right? And it's a beautiful thing because for Paul, it meant I love my master and I'm willing to be his slave for life. Now, some of you might be thinking, I don't know if I like being the slave of anybody.

And I get that. The word slave certainly has a negative connotation, but let me remind you something about freedom, which we typically say is the opposite of slavery. Let me remind you of the fact that the Lord God is the only person in the universe who is truly free. We like to say that we're free. We live in a country that cherishes our freedom and in many ways and in many respects, we are in fact free.

We're free people. Thank you, Jesus. But there are many other ways that we don't have freedom. We're not free of everything. The Lord God, however, is free.

The only free person in the universe, all right? Truly free. And that means he's the only one that can give you freedom. Okay? The only one.

The government can't give you freedom. The president can't give you total freedom. The best army in the world can't give you complete and total freedom. Only God can do that. And that's what he wants to do.

He wants to make you free. In fact, Jesus gave a promise related to this. Let's put it on the screen from John chapter eight. And this is Jesus talking. It says, if the son sets you free, he says, you'll be free indeed.

And I like the fact that he put the word indeed at the end there, because that kind of punctuates the kind of freedom that he's talking about, which is total freedom. He wants to give you total freedom. He

wants to make you completely free. How do you do that by becoming his slave? And that's kind of the paradox of the situation and Paul knew and understood that he says I am the servant slave I am the doulos of Jesus Christ and as such I am free.

I have been set free It's a beautiful picture Of what Jesus wants to do in all of our lives. We're still in verse 1 You'll notice Paul goes on to introduce himself as one who was called to be an apostle He doesn't just simply say I am an apostle He says I was I am called to be an apostle and it was a very important thing To Paul to put it just that way because he wanted his audience to know That his apostolic role in his position was one that had been Given him from God and was not something of his own making because you know There's anybody in the world can call themselves. Whatever they want to say Whatever they want to call themselves They can say I'm a pastor or I'm an evangelist or I'm a this or I'm at that Anybody can do that and believe me. There are plenty of people doing just that They are essentially what they are of their own making they are they are self-appointed Paul wasn't self-appointed, you know, and And so this is a very important beginning to this letter Paul wants his readers to know I am in this position because God placed me in this position I've been called to this I've been ordained and so forth and and and and we we we know of Paul's calling because Luke Aren't you looking forward to meeting a guy like Luke in heaven someday? I want to sit down with Luke he just sounds like a great guy to sit down and chat with but Luke, you know was such a historian and he gave us in his narrative, so Such wonderful insights of Paul's Calling to be an apostle.

Let me show you this on the screen from Acts chapter 13 It goes like this now there were in the church at Antioch, which was north of Jerusalem prophets and teachers and Luke named some of them there Barnabas Simeon who was called Niger Lucius of Cyrene many and a lifelong friend of Herod the Tetrarch and Saul, of course, he's going to be known as Paul forthcoming, but it says while there were worshiping the Lord and fasting the Holy Spirit said did you catch that? By the way, this wasn't a voice that came out over a speaker somewhere Luke has already gone to trouble to tell us that there were prophets in the church and A prophet is someone who speaks for the Lord who has a message And so this is one of and we don't know which one maybe even multiple Individuals it says that the Holy Spirit spoke and obviously through the prophets saying set apart for me Barnabas and Saul For the work to which I have called them and then the Bible says that after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them And sent them off and what I love about this is really several things first of all, you see that this calling from God upon Paul's life was one that was Communicated through the Holy Spirit. It was communicated in In such a way that the church heard it and knew and understood that this is not the Apostle Paul Coming up with some sort of a self-appointed role. He didn't just waltz into their meeting one day and go. Oh, by the

way I'm an apostle The whole church heard these prophetic words and they knew that Paul had been ordained By God and chosen to function in this role and the other thing I love about this passage is that they laid hands on these men and they sent them out and the reason I love that is because I believe that that's the order that we are to use as We bring forth ministries from within the church and send them out, you know We've we've kind of boy I tell you I've been a pastor for a long time and I Watched as a lot of people did this backwards Essentially they decided that they were going to be a missionary or or This or that or the other thing and then they came to the church and said would you put your stamp of approval on me?

And and support me and and that sort of thing because I'm out here doing this work Well, they never got sent out in the first place. I Love the idea of the church sending people out. I think that we are to be the body That recognizes the gifting in someone Recognizes that the Holy Spirit has placed that gifting upon someone and then sends them out We lay hands on them and send them forth. I like that idea. I think this is a good model You know for us to to follow, you know, if it wasn't for the church I never would have found out that that that I was a teacher when I first started serving the Lord, you know, I was in my 20s about 25 years old and and I was asked by the pastor of the church that I was attending Sue and I were asked to to lead the the youth group and And I had no idea that was even going to include teaching at the time and he said he said we've got this gal who leads our youth group and and She could really use some help because she's really short and it was a senior high and most of the kids were taller than this gal and took advantage of her and and so he said would you guys go and just kind of hang out with this gal and support her and The minute we got there.

She's like, oh, are you guys here to help? She's I'm gone. She left she literally left us in charge and and we And some of you don't really know our story But Sue and I had really just recently come to the Lord as far as beginning to get serious about walking with Jesus We're brand new right and we're in charge of the youth group and I figure well I got to come up with something and so and and I was learning things during during like I Mean for the first time and then teaching it to the kids on Wednesday It was like it was fresh out of the oven so to speak, you know I was just learning and so I but as I taught more and more there they began to recognize The church began to recognize that there's this gift of teaching in this individual and I'm so glad that happened that way you know because I Would have never Dreamed that that was in fact the case. So I really believe that this idea of the church recognizing Acknowledging and and sending out and equipping is just a really important thing Finally at the end of verse 1 Paul clarifies his calling as someone who as he says is set apart for the gospel of God I love that Paul says I'm set apart for the gospel of God and what he means by that is that that's that's my total focus Don't expect me to talk to you about

political activism Don't expect me to talk to you about social reform. That's not what God's called me to I am called by God to Literally fixate on the gospel of Jesus Christ now I'm not saying that political activism or social reform is a bad thing not saying that at all I'm just saying that there are people who know that they know that they know This is my calling and this is what I'm gonna do so don't ask me to do something else, you know There's a lot of pastors who spend a lot of time talking about politics from the pulpit And I'm not here to judge whether that's good bad or indifferent But it's something that I never ever did never once in 40 years of pastoring And the reason is because God called me to teach the Bible Right, and that's it and it's all I'm never gonna do, you know and and and when I got done teaching through the whole Bible, we started over again and And and I I appreciate people like Paul and others who know their calling You know now somebody else might have a slightly different calling and they might look at that other person and say my you're narrow All you want to talk about is Jesus.

Well, you know if that's your calling then that's what you're supposed to do Take for example the the spiritual gift of an evangelist. That's all he wants to do. That's his passion his overwhelming and overarching passion is to tell people about Jesus and Grab people who are drowning and pull them up into the boat That's the work of an evangelist We don't expect them to be anything other because that is their calling All right, I love that and then concerning this gospel message Paul goes on in verse 2 he says it was promised Beforehand through the prophets in the Holy Scriptures And by the way, that statement should not surprise you when the Bible says that the gospel was promised beforehand Well for two reasons, it shouldn't surprise you first of all God always tells things through the prophets. Did you know that there's this interesting verse? I want to show it to you on the screen.

It's from Amos the book of Amos in the Old Testament chapter 3 verse 7 I like quoting this out of the NIV. It says surely the Sovereign Lord does nothing Without revealing his plan to his servants the prophets So that's the first reason why it shouldn't surprise you that we're told here That the gospel was foretold but you You might be asking yourself, well, where was the gospel foretold beforehand in the Old Testament? Well, keep your finger in Romans and turn with me over to Isaiah 53 real quick. I'm going to make you go to a couple other books here in this particular study. I won't do this terribly often, but I want you to do it this time.

Make your way over to Isaiah chapter 53, Isaiah chapter 53. By the way, this is a great, this is a great chapter to go over this week. In fact, on Friday, you might want to read through this whole chapter on Friday. Skip down to verse four. It says, surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows.

Yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God and afflicted. And he was pierced for our transgressions. He was crushed for our iniquities. Upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace. And with his wounds, we are healed.

All we like sheep have gone astray. We have turned every one to his own way and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. Guys, you know what we just read? We read the gospel. That's it.

That's the gospel right there. That's the good news. Right? Because that's what gospel means. Now go over to Jeremiah chapter 31.

Real quick. Jeremiah chapter 31. And then skip down to verse 31. Jeremiah 31, 31. It goes like this.

Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the Lord. For this is the covenant that I made with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord. I will put my law within them. That's the work of the Holy Spirit that now indwells believers. And I will write it on their hearts.

And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, Know the Lord, for they shall all know me. From the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord. And look at this last line. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sins no more.

That's beautiful. I love this. It's probably one of my favorite passages in the Bible. But what it is, is the gospel. It's the gospel given beforehand in the Old Testament.

And that's what Paul is talking about. So back to Romans, verse three, Paul now begins to speak of Jesus, saying concerning his son, who was descended from David, according to the flesh, 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. There are three basic points that Paul brings out concerning Jesus. And I'm going to put these one by one up on the screen for you. The first point that Paul makes is that Jesus was a descendant of David, according to the flesh.

And of course, that simply means that he is a man. I have to be careful not to say was a man. He is a man. He remains a man to this day. Our God.

I know. That's why we call it the miracle of the incarnation, okay? Our God, who sits at the right hand of the Father in power, is a man. And he remains a man. And he remains visibly scarred from what he did for you and me on the cross.

And of course, this point that Paul makes here in Romans is absolutely necessary as he begins or goes on in this letter to develop his argument about how Jesus came as the second Adam, which we will get to a little bit later on around chapter five. But the second point that we'll put up on the screen here, that Paul is making here, is that Jesus is the son of God, according to the Holy Spirit. And point two is all about recognizing that he is equal to God, not just a God. He is equal to the Father. And that is why Paul wrote that Jesus was declared there in that verse to be the son of God in power, okay?

Now to say Jesus is the son of God is to say that he is equal to God, right? Equal to God the Father. You cannot say one without the other. And despite all of the biblical evidence to the contrary, we've been kind of duped by groups like the Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons who will acknowledge Jesus as a God. And they'll even say, they'll even refer to him as the son of God.

I think they probably wouldn't even have any trouble referring him as the only begotten of the Father. But to them, they've made a kind of a switch in their minds to divorce the idea of title, the title son of God from the equality of God the Father. It is literally impossible to do that. And we have to come back to the understanding that when we refer to Jesus this way as in a unique relationship to the Father, as to his sonship, that it must mean equality. It must.

It cannot mean anything other, right? And if you've allowed that to seep into your heart, you can thank your local Jehovah's Witness probably because they're the ones that have really propagated that idea. You know, let me show you how John identified Jesus prior to his incarnation on the screen from John chapter, well, you guys know this, in the beginning was the word he says. He doesn't, he doesn't actually even say in the beginning was Jesus. Jesus is a human name that was given to him at a point in time, right?

So John is going back. He's going back before the incarnation. And he's talking to you and me about Jesus before he was named Jesus. And he says in the beginning was the word. And what does he say?

The word was with God. Yep. Right there alongside. And the word was God. He doesn't say that the word was a God.

In fact, he never would say that the word was a God. You know, what's interesting about the word a, if you guys remember your grammar, the word a is the indefinite article next to the word B, which is the definite article. So a is an, do you know that Greek doesn't have an indefinite article? So if it's in

somebody's Bible and it is, it's in, it's in the New World Translation, which is the Jehovah's Witnesses Bible. If the word a is there, it means they put it in contrary to the Greek.

Now some of you might object and say, well, now wait a second here, Pastor Paul, I've read my Bible and I've seen the word a in there plenty of times in other situations. And that is true. The English translators do put the word a, the indefinite article in many sentences to make the sentence make sense. However, the context must demand it. Did you hear me?

The context of the passage must demand the inclusion of the indefinite article for it to be there. Otherwise you leave it out. Now when you read John 1, 1, the only reason you would put a in there is if you had a previous belief that Jesus is a God and not equal to God the Father, you see. And so what that tells you is they had a predisposition or a bias, if you will, rather than just taking the Greek as it was, right? There's no other reason to believe that Jesus is a God, none.

The Bible doesn't give us any other reason, right? Now if you skip down to verse 14, which we'll do on the screen here, John goes on to say the word became flesh and dwelt among us and we have seen his glory, glory as the only son from the Father full of grace and truth. And I want you to take note of that phrase, the only son from the Father. He is not the only son of the Father, he is the only son from the Father. And that is why basically what the idea here is, this phrase, the only son from the Father can be translated.

the only begotten of the Father, and some Bibles actually do that, and there's nothing wrong with that rendering, because this is the Greek word monogenes, and it literally means only begotten. Now there are other sons of God in this room, we're sons by adoption, right? Jesus is a son, right, by begetting, as we speak of his earthly incarnation, and because he is begotten of the Father, he is of the Father, and he is equal to the Father. And then point number three we're going to put up on the screen, of the points that the Apostle Paul is making, is that very simply the resurrection of Jesus is proof that he is God. It is the evidence, if you will, you know, not that we needed evidence, but we will take it anywhere we can get it, that's fine, and so we're given this evidence, and Peter actually declared this in his well-known sermon that he gave during Pentecost.

Let me put that up on the screen from Acts chapter 2, you'll remember when Peter was preaching, he said God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, why? Because it was not possible for him to be held by it, it is death. It wasn't possible, okay? It wasn't possible for death to hold him. You'll remember that Jesus didn't die from his wounds, Jesus gave up his spirit, do you remember that?

Do you remember Jesus said, no one takes my life from me, I have authority to lay it down, I have authority to take it up again, no one takes my life from me, right? So what did Jesus do? After he had finished his work, it says he dismissed his spirit, it's kind of like dismissing a room full of people, you can go now, kind of a weird sort of a thought, isn't it? Talking to your spirit and saying you can leave now, right? And of course everybody was surprised that he had died so quickly, usually, I mean, people were known to linger on the cross for days, for days.

But Jesus dismissed his spirit, right? And because death has no hold on him, he gave himself willingly to death and then he raised himself out of that death. Do you know what's interesting about the Bible? It credits the resurrection to all three persons of the Godhead, did you know that? The Bible tells us that God the Father raised him from the dead, it says he was raised through the power of the Holy Spirit and Jesus himself said, I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again.

And so he spoke of his resurrection as a work of his own, right? And this is the evidence, if you will, for what Paul is saying as it relates to the person of Jesus. Verse five, look with me in your Bible, 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, including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ. I want you to take a moment to really just think about these two verses and I wanted to take them by themselves because it's so easy to read them and to miss a rather monumental truth that is being conveyed here. Because Paul begins, he defines his ministry in these verses, he acknowledges that his role as an apostle is one that comes as a recipient of the grace of God and so forth to do something very specific.

And then he makes another statement in these verses about obedience to God. And I want to talk to you just a little bit about obedience to God. You know, there's a lot of passages in the New Testament that address the issue of obedience and that means you and I living a life of obedience, living a life pleasing to God. But you know what I have found out as a pastor? Christians don't know how to do that.

They don't know how to walk in obedience. They know they're supposed to, but they don't know how. And Paul is giving a clue here which is going to develop later. And I'm going to put these verses up on the screen and I'm going to do it so that I can highlight the section that I really want you to look at. It's Romans 1, 5 and 6.

There we go. I got it in caps and I made it even in color so you can't miss it. What did Paul say he's been given? He's been given grace and apostleship to do something. To bring about the obedience of what?

Of faith. See this is the part that we miss. Paul's talking here, and let's go ahead and leave this up for a bit. He's talking about the obedience that comes from faith. And when you stop and think about that phrase, the obedience of faith, you have to confess that it really doesn't match with what we know to be true about where obedience typically comes from.

When we think about obedience and where it comes from, we understand that there are all kinds of different ways that you can get somebody to obey. For example, there's the obedience that comes from rules. That's essentially what the Pharisees and religious leaders of Jesus's day believed all about. That's where obedience came from. You follow the rules.

You've got the law, right? And you follow the law, and we keep the law, and they of course prided themselves in the belief that they could actually do that to the point of being saved. But you know, that's how a lot of people today still relate to this idea of how to live a life pleasing to God. I'm going to obey the rules. I remember years ago, years and years ago, we had a guy heading up our youth, and he was witnessing to a kid that was in high school.

He was like a senior in high school. But he was raised in an unbelieving home, and so this guy who was our youth leader is sharing the gospel with him, and the kid kind of interrupted him, and he goes, just tell me the rules. Just give me the rules, and I'll follow the rules, right? Because he thought that's what it was all about. Just tell me the rules.

Well that's what we know. I mean, good grief, you get in your car, you get out on the road, if it's an unfamiliar road, you look for a speed limit sign, because you know, hey, if I don't follow the rules, I'm liable to get pulled over, and it might cost me something. We know about obedience that comes from rules. We also understand obedience that comes from instruction. You know, train up a child in the way that he should go and all that kind of good stuff.

That's telling you and me that there is an obedience that can emerge from a protracted period of time of instruction. But that's not what Paul's talking about here. He's not talking about obedience that comes from rules. He's not talking about obedience that comes from instruction. And then there's that other kind of obedience that comes from intimidation.

And most of us know what that's all about, too. I don't know if you were ever bullied when you were a kid, but essentially, that's what's going on. The bully is trying to get you to obey. And he's using, or she, I suppose, is using, you know, intimidation to do it. So you can see this kind of obedience anywhere from a schoolyard to, you know, the palaces of dictators who rule with an iron fist, you know.

But that's not what Paul's talking about. He's not talking about obedience that comes from intimidation. None of those things match what Paul is talking about. What he's talking about is obedience that comes from faith. And that's a new concept to most Christians.

And Paul only mentions it here. And he's not going to get around to explaining it until chapter six. So you're going to have to kind of hang on a little bit. I'll give you a little snapshot of coming attractions, okay? We'll put this on the screen.

From Romans chapter six, here's how Paul begins to define this idea. He says, we know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again. He says, death no longer has dominion over him. For the death he died, he died to sin once for all. But the life he lives, he lives to God.

So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. Now, if you had to pick out a key word in that passage, what would it be? I'll tell you, it would be the word consider. If you have a new King James, it's the word reckon. But whether you take the word consider or the word reckon, they both mean believe, right?

It essentially means to view yourself as being dead to sin because of what Jesus did on the cross. And this is what Paul is talking about. He says, we have received apostleship so that we might bring about the obedience of faith. And what he's saying is, when you truly begin to... understand what Jesus accomplished for you on the cross, you realize that he did more than just die for your eternal salvation and the life that you have for eternity.

He died also for your life today, so that you might live a life of freedom. But how does that life come? Most Christians will say, well, you got to work hard. In fact, there's a there's a huge number of Christians who believe, I'm saved by grace through faith, and I'm kept saved by working hard. You got to keep and some people are even taught, you know, hey, this all this salvation by grace through faith, that's all wonderful.

But once you get saved, now you got to keep the law, you got to keep the 10 Commandments. And what they're basically saying is, you got to keep yourself saved. Well, listen, I don't care whether works comes at the beginning in the middle or at the end. If works is in there anyway, it's salvation by works. It doesn't matter.

It doesn't matter whether you accept salvation by grace through faith at the beginning and then try to keep yourself saved through works. It's still salvation by works. You can't separate it. And the Bible tells us our salvation is not by works. All right, we're saved by grace through faith.

Well, guess how obedience comes about? Oh, my, it's the same way. Faith. By believing that Jesus has set me free. That Jesus, when I came to him, I embraced in him a death, literally shared his death.

By the way, that's what we picture in water baptism. When we baptize, that's why we baptize people by immersion, because the whole process of baptism by immersion is a picture of dying with Christ, and then being raised up from that death to live a new life. Right? And when we get to Romans chapter six, I promise you, we're going to develop this thoroughly. And we're going to talk more about it.

But I want you to know right here right now, that if you've been white knuckling your way through life, trying to be a good Christian, my advice is knock it off. Because that's not going to work. You don't walk with God by making promises to God, or gritting your teeth, or trying harder. You know, I've talked to people that said, Pastor, I'm trying hard to live for Jesus. You know, it's like, how's that working for you?

You're probably going to get an ulcer. But I don't think it's probably going to change the way you live. That comes by faith. Listen, our life in Jesus begins with faith, and ends with faith. And it's faith all the way in between.

From faith to faith. And this is good news, by the way. So anyway, like I said, we'll talk about this in more detail. Verse seven, in your Bible, it says, and this is where Paul gives the name of the recipients of the letter to all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints. I want to remind you that a saint is a Christian.

I don't care what you've been taught. It literally means one who is set apart for God. That's what the word means. And so if you're a believer today, then you're a saint. Right?

So you can call me St. Paul if you want to. I actually have a city named after me. It's in Minnesota. Yeah.

Anyway. So Paul goes on, he then gives his typical greeting, grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. And not only is this greeting typical, but it's also always given in this very order. Grace and peace. It's never given the other way around.

Grace and peace. Because you can't put peace in front of grace. Grace is God's favor in our lives. Right? Did you know that God favors you?

Did you know that? I hope you know that tonight. God favors you. He loves you. He adores you.

He favors you. Do you want to know how that favor comes into your life? Because he's chosen to do it. He's simply chosen to favor you. Right?

That's grace. It's, you know, the theological definition of grace essentially is unmerited favor. So it's favor that you have not earned or merited in any way. Right? Now, you hear that.

You hear me saying that. My question to you is, have you accepted it? Have you embraced grace? Because you know what happens when you embrace it? You have peace with God.

And that's why Paul always says grace and peace from God, our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. There, as I've said before, there are many Christians that I've met over the years who know that they're saved, but they don't have peace with God. And the reason is, is because they believe that Jesus died for them on the cross, but they believe, once again, that they have to be on a performance track with God in order for things to go well in their lives. And so basically, their life is one of performance. And the problem with being on a performance track is you never know if you've done it good enough.

That's the thing about works. If you know somebody who is a legalist, and who's always trying to please God by keeping the law or doing things like that, you know a miserable person. Because a legalist can never know if they've been good enough. When you read that story of that rich young ruler that comes to Jesus and says, what do I have to do to have eternal life? He says, what good thing must I do?

Right? And Jesus goes, why are you talking to me about good? There's only one who's good. And of course, the young man doesn't even hear him say that. If he had, he would have walked away and went, okay, there's my answer.

So Jesus started talking to him on the basis of a legalist. He said, okay, well, you want to be perfect, keep the law. Well, he says, like what? So Jesus names some things in the law. You know what the guy goes?

He says, I've kept all those. Which, of course, was a lie. And then he said this, what else do I need to do? That's the heart. That's the voice of the performance track.

I'm doing it. But what else? What else do I have to do? There's never a sense of assurance. There's never a sense of peace.

There's never a sense of knowing that I know that I know. I hope tonight you can say, if you were asked, that you are 100% sure that if you were to die tonight, or tomorrow, or whatever, you'd go to be with the Lord. I hope you could, if I, if I asked, and I've done this with people, I've said, okay, scale of one

to 10, how confident are you that you're going to heaven? And you know, people usually go about five. And then I'll ask them, why?

Why? Why didn't you give me a 10? Well, it's been a rough week. Yeah. And then I come back and I go, listen, the number has nothing to do with you.

The question has nothing to do with your life, or how good of a life you've lived. Jesus didn't come to die for people that could do a five out of 10. He came to save people who are a zero. But he came so that you and I can say, it's a 10. I know that I know that I know I'm gonna, I'm gonna go be with the Lord.

I know it. Why? Because he did the work. And I've received him as my Savior. That's the beginning of embracing grace.

Because you see, it doesn't just start with it doesn't end with salvation. God's grace and love toward us permeates our lives in him. And when we understand that, and you understand that even though you're kind of a mess up, that God still loves you, and he still favors you, you have peace. You have peace with God. You go, thank you, Jesus.

I have peace tonight. Because I know, I know that I know that I know he loves me. He saved me. And even though I had a rough day today, and a couple of words came out of my mouth that shouldn't have, or I thought some things that I shouldn't have thought about somebody, or I this or I did that or whatever, I know that that doesn't nullify who I am in Jesus and his love for me. Grace and peace.

Right? Okay, let's read through some of these other verses. First, Paul goes on verse eight. First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed in all the world. For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing, I mention you always in my prayers, asking that somehow, by God's will, I may now at least succeed in coming to you.

For I long to see you that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you. That is that may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine. I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that I have often intended to come to you, but thus far have been prevented, in order that I may reap some harvest among you, as well as among the rest of the Gentiles. I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. So I'm eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.

We're going to go through these verses pretty rapidly. This, too, is kind of a common element of Paul's letters. He has a section where he offers thanks concerning the people he's writing, in this case, the believers in Rome. And he says, your faith is proclaimed in all the world. And by the way, that was a big deal, because it wasn't easy being a Christian in Rome.

The Christians were often blamed for just about everything that went wrong. And they were persecuted. And they were being martyred. And yet their faith was known. Their faith was known.

So Paul tells them that he constantly prays for them. He longs to visit them. He says that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith. And then in verses 13 to 15, he assures them that even though he's longed to be among them for a long time, he's been prevented from doing so. He says in verse 14, I'm under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians.

Barbarians most likely refers to groups that had not really embraced the Greco-Roman culture, essentially other groups. But Paul says, I'm obligated to bring the gospel to all of them. He says, I'm eager to preach the gospel to you. And then finally, the last two verses we're going to look at tonight, verse 16 and 17. And I bet you these are some memory verses for some of you.

For I am not ashamed of the gospel. For it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. That means Gentile. For in it, the gospel, the righteousness of God is revealed, look at this, from faith for faith, as it is written, the righteous shall live by faith. And in these final two verses that we're going to be looking at here tonight, Paul kind of gives a little glimpse at the main themes that he's going to be talking about in depth over the course of the next several chapters.

In fact, really through chapter 11. But it starts with that simple statement, I'm not ashamed of the gospel. And when Paul says that, he's essentially saying that I place a great value upon the gospel of Jesus. It's not something that I take lightly. It's not something I think about lightly.

There's great value in my mind as it relates to the gospel of Jesus Christ. And the fact is we're usually not ashamed of the things that we value, you know? The things you value in life, we're rarely ashamed of. And usually we aren't embarrassed by things that we value as well. And that's an important thing, that we're not, we not be embarrassed or devalue the gospel because I want to remind you of some rather sobering words that our Lord Jesus said.

Up on the screen from Luke chapter nine, Jesus said, whoever's ashamed of me and my words, of him will the son of man be ashamed when he comes in his glory, in the glory of the Father and of the holy

angels, right? So we value, like Paul, the gospel message. So Paul explained why he had no shame as he goes on, he says, it's the power of God. That's what the gospel is. It's the power of God for salvation.

And when you think of salvation, don't just think of your eternal salvation because salvation, the word, which by the way, essentially, literally means deliverance, but it goes far beyond just your eternal life or the promise of eternal life. When we talk about salvation, it's the power of God to change a life, to transform a life. Those of you who are in Christ tonight have been changed. You've been transformed. I'm not the person I used to be before I met Jesus.

Thank God for that, you know? And that's what Paul's talking about when he talks about this power. I'm not ashamed of the gospel. It's the power of God to change a life. It can take a blind man and make him see, you know?

It can take a deaf man and make him hear, and I'm not just talking about physical blindness and deafness. We were all spiritually blind and deaf, but God gave us eyes to see and ears to hear. That's a transformation. Do you guys remember? Do you remember trying to read the Bible before you came to Jesus?

Wasn't it an exercise in futility? You would read the Bible and go, I don't understand what this is about. I don't get this. And you'd shut it and put it down and go, I guess some people can understand that, but I can't. And then you got saved, and the blinders came off, and suddenly you couldn't get enough.

It's like, all I wanna do is stay home and read the Bible because the Holy Spirit is now speaking to your heart. It's been a transformation that's taken place. It can turn hopelessness into hope. It can turn sadness into joy. Worry into peace.

Weakness into strength. Listen, Jesus changes people. Jesus changes people. You can't meet Jesus and walk away unchanged. And what activates that power?

Paul says it right there. He says, it's the gospel to everyone who believes. Okay? That transformational power is unleashed in you and me when we believe, when we put our faith in the finished work of Jesus, right? Verse 17, for in it, the gospel, the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written.

And then he's gonna quote Habakkuk chapter two here. The righteous shall live by faith. And this single verse, verse 17, the last one we're gonna look at is one that Paul is gonna take the time to develop in

this letter. This whole idea of the righteousness of God is now ours through faith. It was a powerful message in Paul's day, and it's a powerful message today.

You know, the Jews that he came from, he was a Pharisee. They believed that righteousness was through works, through keeping the law. That's how you stand righteous before God. And then Paul was completely transformed in his understanding that righteousness comes by faith. And what that means is, through faith, you have a righteous standing with God the Father.

You are righteous in the eyes of the Father. And this has nothing to do with, again, how you've lived your life. There is such a thing as righteousness from that perspective, but now we're talking about righteousness before the Father. You're standing before the Father. He looks at you and he says, that one is clothed in the righteousness of my son.

That one's mine. And I know you had a rough day, and I know you did and said things you shouldn't have, but you're mine. And I see you as righteous in my sight. Guys, that is good news, amen? Father, thank you, first of all, for this first section of Romans chapter one.

We're excited to get into this book and really mine the depths of what you have to say in it to us and for us. And we pray that our hearts would just continue to be open to hear your voice. We look to you, Jesus. We pray for your Holy Spirit to speak to us through the week. We pray, Lord God, that you would continue to guide and direct us in wisdom regarding faith, faith and the importance of faith in our lives.

Thank you, Father. We praise you. We worship you. We bless you. In the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior, and all God's people said together, amen.