

THE ROAD OF THE RIGHTEOUS

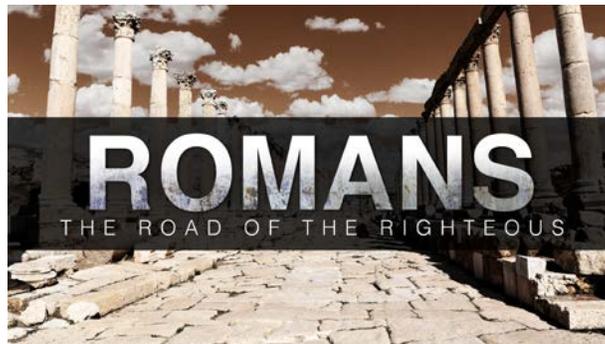
Expositional Study Of Romans

Romans 1:1a

Written By

©Pastor Marty Baker

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To gain access to someplace special, or to work in an unusual location, D.C. people know you need one main thing: the right credentials. Every time I go to the White House to meet with the Vice President’s staff for Bible study, I had to submit the correct personal information to the Secret Service. You know the drill. They want your full name, driver’s license, and, of course, your Social Security number. Once they run this data through their computers, they can determine if you are a viable person or not, one worthy of gaining access to the coveted location behind the black iron gates. Last time I approached the guard booth on 17th Street, I had a most interesting conversation with the guard. He said, “Why are you here today?” I replied, “To see the Vice President and his staff.” He quickly retorted, “Sure you are.” After a few minutes of looking at my credentials and studying his computer screen, he handed everything back to me and said, “You were right. Have a good day.”

Paul’s desire to travel to the pivotal church in Rome reflects what we’ve just talked about. To gain entrance to this particular church so he could teach them and spend quality time with their leadership, he had to possess the right credentials. False teachers already plagued the church at this day and time, therefore, providing the right information to the church would place him in a position to visit them in the future. What we find, then, in the opening seven verses are Paul’s credentials, which, in his mind, should be used to validate the fact he was more than qualified to come and visit with these particular saints. In typical Pauline fashion, it is not surprising to discover his opening words are one long complex sentence in Greek:

Παῦλος δοῦλος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ κλητὸς ἀπόστολος ἀφωρισμένος εἰς εὐαγγέλιον θεοῦ ² ὃ προεπηγγείλατο διὰ τῶν προφητῶν αὐτοῦ ἐν γραφαῖς ἀγίαις ³ περὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ τοῦ γενομένου ἐκ σπέρματος Δαυὶδ κατὰ σάρκα ⁴ τοῦ ὀρισθέντος υἱοῦ θεοῦ ἐν δυνάμει κατὰ πνεῦμα ἀγιωσύνης ἐξ ἀναστάσεως νεκρῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν ⁵ δι οὗ ἔλάβομεν χάριν καὶ ἀποστολὴν εἰς ὑπακοήν πίστεως ἐν πᾶσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν ὑπὲρ τοῦ ὀνόματος αὐτοῦ ⁶ ἐν οἷς ἐστε καὶ ὑμεῖς κλητοὶ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ⁷ πᾶσιν τοῖς οὖσιν ἐν Ῥώμῃ ἀγαπητοῖς θεοῦ κλητοῖς ἀγίοις χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη ἀπὸ θεοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ

I know if you don't read Greek this doesn't mean that much to you, but it is worth showing and talking about, briefly. What does this lengthy sentence tell us? Good question. Several things:

- Paul was a passionate, excitable, positive person. It's as if he is saying, "Wow, I am so excited about my prospects of coming to the church in Rome, I can't wait to get all of my credentials out on the table. So, here we go . . . bam, bam, bam, bam. When most would have had a period inserted here and there so they should catch a breath, Paul took one deep breath and just went for it.
- Paul had a lot to say so he optimized his time by speaking quickly to make sure he covered what needed covering. I can relate. I've spoken fast all my life. It's just the way I'm wired. I'm not a slow, prodding speaker, as you know by now. But, hey, I'm just following Paul's godly model.
- Paul's brain buzzed constantly with thought and information. Like a powerful computer, he was always processing information, evaluating data, crunching concepts, and formulating positions. You can readily see this just in how he opens this letter. It's like you just fired up one powerful chip embedded in a computer to end all computers.
- Paul was an emotional man, even though he was a thinker type. What a balance. On the one hand he could teach you like no other and stretch and challenge your thinking, while on the other he could share from his heart and touch your heart. In Ephesians 3 you will notice a straight line in your Bible at the end of verse one. The line is not picked up again until the close of verse 18. This shows how quickly he mentally pivoted and stopped and shared with the Ephesians saints some wonderful details about the mystery of the gospel being offered to the Gentiles. This whole parenthetical discussion simply drips with passion, love, and truth, and once it hit Paul it just had to come out

Pragmatically, I would add one more observation. We typically quickly read the introductory salutations at the openings of Paul's letters to get to the meat of the message. Admit it. You've done it. I've done it, but I stopped doing this years ago because I can now see just how many spiritual nuggets can be unearthed when the interpreter slows down and actually studies the soil.

Based on this last observation, you probably know what's coming next. I am here to tell you we will not be running past this part of the mine shaft called Romans in a hurried manner.

Shocking, I know, but it is so important we move methodically to make sure we discover the rich truths buried here so we can better appreciate the book as a whole. Further, by looking at Paul's credentials in greater detail, I know the Spirit of God will speak to and challenge us individually to go and learn from his instructive example. So, with all of this preparatory information before us, I invite you, as fellow miners, to entertain the hermeneutical question before us:

What Are The Spiritual Credentials of Paul? (Romans 1:1-7)

As we study his credentials, I will challenge you up front to be asking yourself one pivotal spiritual question: What are my spiritual credentials to do what I do for God? Better yet, what concepts from Paul's credentials convict and challenge me? Further, once I isolate answers to these questions, I then have a spiritual obligation to go out and make necessary life changes.

Writing to one of the greatest New Testament churches of it today, Paul could've laid his credentials on thick and heavy. He could've said, "This letter is from Paul, the man who has personally converted when he saw Jesus on the Damascus Road, the missionary traveler, the man who has been stoned equipped for Jesus, the astute and gifted theologian, the Greek and Hebrew scholar, and the founder of numerous churches throughout Asia minor." But he didn't. He didn't draw any attention to his stature at all, did he? He, as a well-grounded rabbinical scholar, remember and applied the word of Solomon when he wrote, "Let another praise you, and not your own mouth; a stranger, and not your own lips" (Proverbs 27:2). He, conversely, only gave us a real, honest appraisal of who he was and what he was all about. Mark it well what he called himself in these opening words to amazing things: a slave and an apostle. These introduce us to his first two credentials as a man of God.

Credential #1: Paul, The Servant (Romans 1:1a)

The New American Standard version of the Bible reads "bond-servant," the King James Version reads, "servant," while the New International version translates the Greek word *doulos* (δοῦλος) also like the KJV. These translations are fine; however, literally the word means one who is a slave. The Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament gives us the various lexical and etymological meanings of this ancient term:

δοῦλος, ου, ὁ (Trag., Hdt.et al.; ins, pap, LXX, Philo, Joseph., Test12Patr)

① **male slave as an entity in a socioeconomic context, *slave*** ('servant' for 'slave' is largely confined to Biblical transl. and early American times [s. OED s.v. servant, 3a and b]; in normal usage at the present time the two words are carefully distinguished [Goodsp., Probs., 77-79]). Opp. ἐλεύθερος 1 Cor 7:21. Lit., in contrast

ⓐ to a master (Did., Gen. 66, 25): Mt 8:9; 10:24f; cp. J 13:16; 15:20.—Mt 13:27f; 21:34ff; 24:45f, 48, 50; 25:14, 19, 21, 23, 26, 30; cp. Lk 19:13, 15, 17, 22.—Mt 26:51; cp. Mk 14:47; Lk 22:50; J 18:10, 26 (on δοῦλος of the ἀρχιερέυς s. Jos., Ant. 20, 181).—Mk 12:2, 4; 13:34; Lk 7:2f, 8, 10; 12:37, 43, 45ff; 17:7, 9f; J 4:51; Col 4:1

(Billerb. IV 698–744: D. altjüd. Sklavenwesen; SZucrow, Women, Slaves, etc. in Rabb. Lit. '32; JJeremias, Jerusalem IIb '37, 184–88; 217–24).—οἱ δ. και οἱ ὑπηρέται J 18:18.—Of slaves sent out with invitations Mt 22:3f, 6, 8, 10; par. Lk 14:17, 21ff; of one who could not pay his debt Mt 18:23, 26ff (but s. 2ba on these pass. fr. Mt). Opp. δεσπότης (as Diod S 15, 8, 2f ὡς δοῦλος δεσπότη; Ps.-Lucian, Asin. 5) I Ti 6:1; Tit 2:9; οἱ δ. in direct address Eph 6:5; Col 3:22.—For lit. on Christianity and slavery (Ath. 35, 1 δ. εἰσιν ἡμῖν 'we have slaves' [who can attest our innocence of the charges]) s. on χράομαι 1a.—Christ, the heavenly κύριος, appears on earth in μορφή δούλου *the form of a slave* (anticipating vs. 8 w. its ref. to crucifixion, a fate reserved for condemned slaves; for the contrast cp. Lucian, Catapl. 13 δοῦλος ἀντὶ τοῦ πάλαι βασιλέως) Phil 2:7 (lit. on κενόω 1b); cp. Hs 5, 2ff (on this MDibelius, Hdb. 564f).—On Ac 2:18 s. under 2bβ.

ⓑ to a free pers. (opp. ἐλεύθερος; Pla., Gorg. 57 p. 502d; Dio Chrys. 9 [10], 4; SIG 521, 7 [III B.C.]; Jos., Ant. 16, 126; Just., D. 139, 5) I Cor 7:21f (cp. the trimeter: Trag. Fgm. Adesp. 304 N., quot. fr. M. Ant. 11, 30 and Philo, Omn. Prob. Lib. 48, δοῦλος πέφυκας, οὐ μέτεστί σοι λόγου=you are a slave, with no share in discussions); 12:13; Gal 3:28; 4:1; Eph 6:8; Col 3:11; Rv 6:15; 13:16; 19:18; IRo 4:3. W. παιδίσκη D 4:10.—House slave in contrast to a son J 8:35; Gal 4:7.

ⓒ in contrast to being a fellow Christian οὐκέτι ὡς δοῦλον, ἀλλὰ ὑπὲρ δοῦλον, ἀδελφὸν ἀγαπητόν Phlm 16.

ⓐ one who is solely committed to another, *slave, subject*; ext. of mng. 1. Mt 6:24; Lk 16:13 express the ancient perspective out of which such extended usage develops: slaves are duty-bound only to their owners or masters, or those to whom total allegiance is pledged.

ⓑ in a pejorative sense δ. ἀνθρώπων *slaves to humans* I Cor 7:23. παριστάναι ἑαυτὸν τινι δοῦλον Ro 6:16. δ. τῆς ἀμαρτίας *slave of sin* J 8:34; Ro 6:17, 20. τῆς φθορᾶς *of destruction* 2 Pt 2:19 (cp. Eur., Hec. 865 and Plut., Pelop. 279 [3, 1] χρημάτων; Thu. 3, 38, 5; Dio Chrys. 4, 60 τ. δόξης; Athen. 12, 531c τῶν ἡδονῶν; 542d; Aelian, VH 2, 41 τοῦ πίνειν; Achilles Tat. 6, 19, 4 τ. ἐπιθυμίας).

ⓑ in a positive sense

α. in relation to a superior human being (here the perspective is Oriental and not Hellenic). Of humble service (opp. πρῶτος) Mt 20:27; Mk 10:44. According to oriental usage, of a king's officials (cp. SIG 22, 4; IMagnMai 115, 4; 1 Km 29:3; 4 Km 5:6; Jos., Ant. 2, 70) *ministers* Mt 18:23, 26ff (s. Spicq, I 383, n. 14 [Lexique 394, n. 4]); cp. the slaves sent out with invitations 22:3f, 6, 8, 10; Lk 14:17, 21ff (but s. 1a above).

β. esp. of the relationship of humans to God (with roots in both OT and Hellenic thought; s. δουλεύω 2aβ) δ. τοῦ θεοῦ *slave of God=subject to God*, owned body and soul

(Eur., Ion 309 τοῦ θεοῦ καλοῦμαι δοῦλος εἰμί τε; Cass. Dio 63, 5, 2; CFossey, Inscr. de Syrie: BCH 21, 1897, p. 60 [Lucius calls himself the δοῦλος of the θεὰ Συρία]; PGM 12, 71 δ. τοῦ ὑψ. θεοῦ; 13, 637ff δοῦλός εἰμι σὸς ... Σάραπι; 59, 2; 4; LXX; ParJer 6:17 [Baruch]; ApcSed 16:7 p. 137, 15; Philo, Rer. Div. Her. 7 al.; Jos., Ant. 11, 90; 101): of Moses (4 Km 18:12; 2 Esdr 19:14; Ps 104:26; Jos., Ant. 5, 39) **Rv 15:3**. Of recipients of gifts from God's spirit **Ac 2:18** (Jo 3:2). Of Christian prophets **Rv 10:7; 11:18** (prophets are also called slaves of God in the OT Jer 25:4; Am 3:7; Da 9:6, 10 Theod.). Of the apostles **Ac 4:29; 16:17** (δ. τοῦ θεοῦ τ. ὑψίστου as Da 3:93 Theod.); **Tit 1:1**; AcPl Ha 6, 35; Christ as master (cp. oriental usage, of a king's official *minister*, and the interpretation of δ. in such sense [s. 2bα]) puts his slaves, the apostles, at the disposal of the Corinthians **2 Cor 4:5**. Of God-fearing people gener. (Ps 33:23; 68:37 al.) **Rv 1:1; Lk 2:29; 1 Pt 2:16; Rv 2:20; 7:3; 19:2, 5; 22:3, 6; 1 Cl 60:2; 2 Cl 20:1; Hv 1, 2, 4; 4, 1, 3; m 3:4 al.** The one who is praying refers to himself as *your* (God's) *slave* (cp. Ps 26:9; Ch 6:23; Da 3:33, 44) **Lk 2:29; Ac 4:29** (FDölger, IXΘΥΣ I 1910, 195ff).—In the same vein, of one's relation to Christ δ. Χριστοῦ, self-designation of Paul (on the imagery s. Straub 37; DMartin, Slavery as Salvation: The Metaphor of Slavery in Pauline Christianity '90) **Ro 1:1; Gal 1:10; Phil 1:1; cp. Col 4:12; 2 Ti 2:24; Js 1:1; 2 Pt 1:1; Jd 1; Rv 1:1; 22:3; 1 Cor 7:22; Eph 6:6**.—On δοῦλοι and φίλοι of Christ (for this contrast s. Philo, Migr. Abr. 45, Sobr. 55; PKatz, Philo's Bible '50, 85ff) **J 15:15**, s. φίλος 2αα.—Dssm., LO 271ff [LAE 323ff]; GSass, δ. bei Pls: ZNW 40, '41, 24–32; LReilly, Slaves in Ancient Greece (manumission ins) '78; COsiek, Slavery in the Second Testament World: BTB 22, '92, 174–79; JHarril, The Manumission of Slaves in Early Christianity '95, s. 11–67 on ancient slavery; KBradley, Slavery and Society at Rome '94; also lit. on χράομαι 1a.—JVogt/HBellen, eds., Bibliographie zur antiken Sklaverei, rev. ed. EHermann/NBrockmeyer '83 (lists over 5000 books and articles); JCMiller, Slavery and Slaving in World History, A Bibliography 1990–91 '93 (lit. p. 196–225).—B. 1332. Schmidt, Syn. IV 124–29 s. δεσπότη. New Docs 2, 52–54. DELG. SEG XLII, 1837 (ins reff.). M-M. TW. Spicq. Sv.¹

From this detailed analysis, it is clear the word speaks directly about someone who was not a hired hand, as it were, who could come and go as they pleased, but of a person who was owned by another. After his conversion on the Damascus Road, Paul, of man of learning and letters, typically used this moniker to define himself.

Paul and Timothy, bond-servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi . . . (Philippians 1:1).

Paul, a bondservant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ . . . (Titus 1:1a).

¹Arndt, William, Frederick W. Danker, Walter Bauer, and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 260.

Why in the world did Paul choose this title for himself? Why did he place such a derogatory term like this at the beginning of the letter of this nature? Let's drill down into this a little further by looking at the concept of the slave first and the Old Testament and then in the New Testament. Perhaps from this venture we will gain a flash of insight.

Servants In The Old Testament. The Old Testament clearly taught that foreigners could be purchased and sold as slaves in Israel (Leviticus 25:44-46). In addition, the father could sell his children into slavery if he needed the cash (Exodus 21:7; Nehemiah 5:5), the widow so her children to pay off her debts, and people could sell themselves into slavery because of financial reasons (Leviticus 25:39; Deuteronomy 15:12-17). However, there was grace built into the concept of slavery from a good and loving heavenly father, God. We know this to be true because every seventh year the law of Moses provided for the release of slaves.

¹²If your kinsman, a Hebrew man or woman, is sold to you, then he shall serve you six years, but in the seventh year you shall set him free. ¹³ When you set him free, you shall not send him away empty-handed. ¹⁴ You shall furnish him liberally from your flock and from your threshing floor and from your wine vat; you shall give to him as the LORD your God has blessed you. ¹⁵ You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God redeemed you; therefore I command you this today. ¹⁶ It shall come about if he says to you, 'I will not go out from you,' because he loves you and your household, since he fares well with you; ¹⁷ then you shall take an awl and pierce it through his ear into the door, and he shall be your servant forever. Also you shall do likewise to your maidservant (Deuteronomy 15).

Paul, a Pharisee steeped in the Mosaic Law, unquestionably knew this passage well. No wonder he applied the concept of a slave to himself because it perfectly described his newfound relationship with Jesus Christ, his new owner.

Prior to testing Christ as his Savior, Paul was a slave to sin. In Romans 6:6-23, he talks about this at length. We will cover this in detail much later in her study, so for now may it suffice to read a few key verses:

¹⁶Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone *as* slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness? ¹⁷But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, ¹⁸and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness (Romans 6).

Based on this passage we learn there are only two types of people in the world: ones who are slaves to sin, and ones who are slaves to Christ. There are no other alternatives and choices. All of this

should make you stop and ask yourself a personal question: “Which type of slave am I?” Here’s another question: Who is my master . . . sin or Jesus, the Savior?”

Paul never forgot what it was like when sin was a slave master. At that time, he did whatever his sinful master requested, commanded, or tempted him with. In theological terms, the sinful disposition of the sinner is what is called total depravity. John MacArthur defines it well in his book *The Vanishing Conscience*:

Theologians refer to this doctrine as ‘total depravity.’ It does not mean that unbelieving sinners are always as bad as they could be (cf. Lk 6:233; Rom. 2:14). It does not mean that the expression of sinful human nature is always lived out to the fullest. It does not mean that unbelievers are incapable of acts of kindness, benevolence, goodwill, or human altruism. This certainly does not mean that non-Christians cannot appreciate goodness, beauty, honesty, decency, or excellence. It does mean that none of this has any merit with God. Depravity also means that evil has contaminated every aspect of our humanity—our heart, mind, personality, emotions, conscience, motives, and will (cf. Jer. 17:9; Jn. 8:44). In reading sinners are therefore incapable of truly loving the God who reveals Himself in Scripture. They are incapable of obedience from the heart, with the righteous motives.²

The sinner may choose to do good deeds, but ultimately his entire being permeated, controlled by, given over to the Master called sin. He is only a slave and will ultimately gravitate toward the decree of his Master.

No doubt, Paul could remember the days when this was true of him, when he blindly incarcerated Christian men and women, and eventually had many of them executed all because of his blind obedience to pharisaical thinking. Paul could remember when he thought holiness had everything to do with what he did externally, and very little with what he internally felt, thought, or believed. He could remember, very clearly, those days when the chain of sin was fastened securely to spiritual legs.

But now, because of his faith relationship with Jesus, Paul was a new spiritual man (2 Corinthians 5:17). Now he was no longer sin’s slave, but Jesus’ slave. Jesus had set him free. With, however, the Old Testament slave analogy in mind, you can almost picture Paul having a hole bored in his ear by Jesus to identify himself as belonging to him.

The Old Testament gives us a beautiful picture of what spiritual slavery is all about, and helps us also understand why Paul picked this as one of his titles. After all, the great saints of the Old Testament were also called slaves, so Paul rightly classified himself along with them (cf. Abraham, Genesis 26:24; Moses, Joshua 1:2; David, Amos, Amos 3:7). The rich spiritual concepts we gain about slavery are also enhanced in the New Testament.

Servants In The New Testament. The term *doulos* 's employee in the New Testament of literal slaves (Ephesians 6:5-9; Colossians 3:11), and it is also used spiritual slaves, slaves of

²John MacArthur, *The Vanishing Conscience* (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1994), 88.

Jesus, Epaphras, James, Peter, Jude and a host of others took this title for themselves as well because it clearly illustrated who owned them (James 1:1-2; 2 Peter 1:1; Jude 1). The concept was one which was also well understood in their day and age because of the presence of the slave trade.

Concerning slavery in the ancient world, A. C. Bouquet observes in his *Everyday Life In New Testament Times*,

According to a census made in the state of Attica in 309 B.C. there were then 21,000 male, free citizens of full age against 400,000 slaves and another estimate makes the total population of 500,000 to be made up of 90,000 citizens, 45,000 resident aliens, and 365,000 slaves. Even the poorest citizen in Athens owned at least one slave.³

Slaves were everywhere and everyone knew what it meant to be one. It meant you were the property of your master and can be sold or traded to anyone at any time. And the family didn't even belong to you, he didn't know property, you could be mutilated or grossly mistreated for the slightest infraction. Slavery spoke of long hours of work, no personal freedom, no personal choice, no vacations, no arguing or discussion, and ultimately no future.

Along these lines Bouquet adds,

Slaves in the minds work in chains in the rate of mortality was terribly high, owing to the lack of ventilation. Slaves generally expected to be tortured if giving evidence in the law court, but on the other hand the life of the slave was protected even from his master, and he could not be put to death without the sentence of the law court.⁴

To be a slave, therefore, was the lowest order of humanity anyone to be classified as. Couldn't get any lower. But this is the title grace things like Paul willingly chose because it best illustrated how a person had traded masters, from one who was ruthless and uncaring, to One which was full of love, compassion, and care.

In Roman times there were two ways you could be freed from slavery. One, you could be freed by the legal act of your master, or two, a ransom could be paid have a sizable amount to gain your freedom. You can easily see that Jesus is the one who is solely capable of freeing the sinner from the taskmaster called sin. Paul talks about this in first Timothy 2:6:

For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and man, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all, the testimony born at the proper time (1 Timothy 2:6).

Paul says the same thing in his letter to the Corinthians:

³A. C. Bouquet, *Everyday Life in New Testament Times* (New York: Charles Scribner and Sons, 1953), 152.

⁴Ibid., 153.

²⁰ For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body (1 Corinthians 6).

Jesus paid the ultimate price to free sinners from the shackles of sin. This is why the hymnist wrote these moving words so long ago:

For nothing good have I, whereby Thy grace to claim—I will wash my garments white, in the blood of Calvary's lamb. Jesus paid it all. All to Him I owe; sin had left a crimson stain—he washed it white as snow.

Yes, we, as believers, have been purchased from the slavery of sin by the person and work of Jesus. Ostensibly, this means that He owns us, that our lives are not our own to be lived as we want but as He wants, that our desires and wishes should think of His will first, and that we should always be ready and willing to do His bidding, to follow where He leads. And one more thing. As slaves of Christ, we, like Paul, should not think highly of ourselves because we recognize who we are. Above all else, we, to, are slaves of Christ.

Now we can better appreciate why Paul opened his letter with this words. He was telling them he was a humble, meek man who was sold out to Jesus. Do not pass too quickly over the fact he states, “Paul, a bond-servant of Jesus Christ.” The words *Paul* and *slave* are nominative nouns in the Greek text, identifying them as the subject. The noun phrase *Christ Jesus* (Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ) is the genitive case. What is a genitive? The genitive, which is typically employed with nouns, according to Daniel Wallace, limits according to quality, while the accusative, or direct object which is typically used with verbs, limits as to quantity.⁵ More specifically, this type of genitival construction can be grammatically classified as a genitive of possession, meaning the phrase possesses the subject. Pragmatically, this means that Paul was completely possessed and owned by Christ Jesus. Even in the grammar Paul left no doubt who he reported to. Do you remember each and every day who you ultimately report to?

One other thing we need to note in passing is the construction *Christ Jesus*. Why did Paul say this? Why didn't he say *Jesus Christ*, which he did in this letter, as well as others (Romans 1:6, 7, 8; 3:22; 5:1, 11, 15, 21)? His point should not be missed, for this was no simple reversing of a name. By placing *Christ* (Χριστου) first, Paul emphatically stated how he, a devout Jew and former devoted Pharisee, had come to view himself as a spiritual slave. THE CHRIST,⁶ the Anointed One,

⁵Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar: Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 76.

⁶ Arndt, William, Frederick W. Danker, Walter Bauer, and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 471.

Χριστός, οὗ (as an adj. in Trag. and LXX; TestReub 6:8; Just., D. 141, 3 [the compound νεόχριστος=newly plastered: Diod S, 38 and 39, Fgm. 4, 3; Appian, Bell. Civ. 1. 74 §342]; in our lit. only as a noun; pl. Just., D. 86, 3.—CTorrey, Χριστός: Quantulacumque '37, 317–24), ὁ.

① **fulfiller of Israelite expectation of a deliverer, the Anointed One, the Messiah, the Christ**, appellative. . . . The Use of 'Anointed' in the Time of Jesus, NovT 8, '66; TRE XXII 630–35) ἐπυνθάνετο ποῦ ὁ Χριστός γεννᾶται *he inquired where the Messiah was to be born Mt 2:4. Cp. 16:16, 20; 22:42; 23:8 v.l., 10; 24:5, 23; 26:63; Mk 1:34 v.l.;*

the prophesied One, had found him. He, after weighing the evidence he heard about the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus from countless Jewish followers, coupled with the fact he visibly saw Him in heaven when Christ allowed him to see into his glorious dimension, placing his faith in this Savior was, well, the logical, thinking thing to do. He, like the Peter, had found *the Christ* (Matthew 16:16, 20), or should I say, the Christ had found him.

Paul knew the sixty exact prophecies Jesus had to fulfill in order to be the Messiah, and he knew Jesus fulfilled them. He also knew the odds of this happening by mere chance were zero. Marvin Bittinger, who had sold over 12 million math books, explains the probability of Jesus fulfilling just nine of the prophesied with this jaw-dropping illustration:

Take a domed football stadium of average size and empty it of everything (standards, seats, lockers, et al.), then proceed to fill all remaining space with grains of white sand—white, except for one grain you marked by coloring it red. What would be the odds of your selecting the same grain out of that whole stadium four times in succession? The answer is 1 in 10 to the 76th power. This is a number so big that it is hard to fathom. Yet those are the odds of Jesus of filling just nine prophecies about his coming.⁷

No wonder Paul said he was a slave or Christ Jesus. He was, and is, in fact, THE CHRIST. The question you must now ask yourself is clear, “Is Jesus the Christ of my life? Have I believed the empirical evidence supporting his identity, or am I still a slave to my own sinful, distorted thinking?” The best decision you will ever make is when you, like Paul, trade Masters. When you do this, you will not only become a member of God’s family, you will become His slave and you will begin to mature spiritually. What happens as you mature? You, like Paul, will talk less and less about yourself, and more about Him.

Credential #2: Paul, The Apostle (Romans 1:1a)

8:29; 12:35; 13:21; 14:61; Lk 3:15; 4:41; 20:41; 22:67; 23:2, 35, 39; 24:26, 46; J 1:20, 25; 3:28; 4:29, 42 v.l.; 6:69 v.l.; 7:26f, 31, 41ab, 42; 9:22; 10:24; 11:27; 12:34 (WCvUnnik, NovT 3, '59, 174–79); 20:31; Ac 2:30 v.l., 31, 36; 9:22; 17:3; 18:5, 28; 26:23; 1J 2:22; 5:1 (OPiper, JBL 66, '47, 445). J translates Μεσσίας as Χριστός 1:41; 4:25. ὁ Χριστός κυρίου Lk 2:26; cp. 9:20; Ac 3:18; 4:26 (Ps 2:2); Rv 11:15; 12:10.—Ἰησοῦς ὁ Χριστός *Jesus the Messiah* (Mel., P. 10, 68) Ac 5:42 v.l.; 9:34 t.r.; 1 Cor 3:11 v.l.; 1J 5:6 v.l.; 1 Cl 42:1b; IEph 18:2. [Ἰησοῦν] τὸν Χριστὸν [καὶ σωτῆρα] ἡμῶν *Jesus the Messiah, our Savior* AcPl Ha 8, 28f. ὁ Χριστός Ἰησοῦς Ac 5:42; 19:4 v.l. Ἰησοῦς ὁ λεγόμενος Χριστός *Jesus, the so-called Messiah* Mt 27:17, 22.—The transition to sense 2 is marked by certain passages in which Χριστός does not mean the Messiah in general (even when the ref. is to Jesus), but a very definite Messiah, Jesus, who now is called *Christ* not as a title but as a name (cp. Jos., Ant. 20, 200 Ἰησοῦ τοῦ λεγομένου Χριστοῦ; Just., D. 32, 1 ὁ ὑμέτερος λεγόμενος Χριστός. On the art. w. Χρ. s. B-D-F §260, 1; Rob. 760f) ἀκούσας τὰ ἔργα τοῦ Χριστοῦ Mt 11:2; cp. Ac 8:5; 9:20 v.l.; Ro 9:3, 5; 1 Cor 1:6, 13, 17; 9:12; 10:4, 16; 2 Cor 2:12; 4:4; Gal 1:7; 6:2; Eph 2:5; 3:17; 5:14; Phil 1:15; Col 1:7; 2:17; 2 Th 3:5; 1 Ti 5:11; Hb 3:14; 9:28; 1 Pt 4:13; 2J 9; Rv 20:4 al.

⁷Norman L. Geisler and Patty Tunnicliffe, *Reasons for Belief* (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 2013), 149.

The Word Defined. What does this mean? Plenty. The Greek *apostolos* (ἀπόστολος) speaks of one who sent on a mission by someone in command.⁸ Jesus rightly applied it to the Twelve Disciples in Matthew 10.

¹ Jesus summoned His twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every kind of disease and every kind of sickness. ² Now the names of the twelve apostles are these: The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; and James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother;

Why the change between *disciple* (μαθητὰς) and *apostle* (ἀπόστολος)? According to Luke 6:12-13, Jesus had more than twelve disciples, but of this larger group He only selected twelve to be His Apostles, ones sent on a special, all-important mission. Further, this was no mere mission to simply deliver a letter. Far from it. These men were empowered to represent their Lord, especially in his absence post-crucifixion, to carry out His kingdom message to the world at large.

Who qualified as an apostle? He must have seen Christ (Acts 1:21), he must have been called by God to be serve in this capacity, and he must be enabled by God to perform miracles. Paul, most certainly, fit these requirements to a tee (1 Corinthians 9:1; 2 Corinthians 11:5; 12:11-12; Galatians 1:1). Just as these chosen and called men served as the foundation of the New Testament Church (Ephesians 2:20), Paul continued their work, first among the Jews and then among the Gentiles.

The Word Displayed. Originally, as we have stated, there were 12 Apostles (Mark 3:13-21). Concerning their work, we read in verse 14,

And he appointed 12, that they might be with him, and that he might send them out to preach.

Ah, there is main purpose of their divine calling: to preach. Preach what? The gospel of Jesus Christ and to teach people His Word so they might come to know Him and walk with Him. These men were on a mission until they died to make sure they delivered Christ's life-giving message. He sent them and they willingly went.

Paul was not part of this original group, but was chosen later. Acts 1 tells us the ancient Church chose Mathias (Acts 1:26) to replace Judas, and Paul was chosen later specifically by the Lord (Acts 9). Paul's encounter with the resurrected Lord not only lead to salvation, but also

⁸ Arndt, William, Frederick W. Danker, Walter Bauer, and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 122. ① of messengers without extraordinary status *delegate, envoy, messenger* (opp. ὁ πρέμψας) **J 13:16**. Of Epaphroditus, messenger of the Philippians **Phil 2:25**.—**2 Cor 8:23**.

② of messengers with extraordinary status, esp. of God's *messenger, envoy* (cp. Epict. 3, 22, 23 of Cynic wise men: ἄγγελος ἀπὸ τ. Διὸς ἀπέσταλται).

served to help them fill the requirements of an apostle. And as with the other apostles, Paul wasted no time committing his life to be sent one, or to be a man on a divine mission. If you trace Paul's life to Acts, you will quickly learn how the message of the Gospel burned in his heart. Everywhere he went he could not help but deliver the gospel, regardless of the personal costs. If you gave him an opportunity, he would seize it to present the gospel of his Lord and Savior. Acts 9:20 captures one of those illustrative moments in his spiritual walk. No sooner did he come to town then we read these words,

... and immediately he began to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues, saying "He is the Son of God."

Did you get that? As a sent one, he spoke without hesitation of the gospel. He certainly wasted no time being a man on a mission. Note also the text says he spoke in synagogues, plural. He went to the toughest places to give them the most tender message, and he did it with great compassion, zeal, and love.

This role as an apostle captivated Paul's very life. In Romans chapter 1, verse 1, he specifically says he was divinely "called" for this venture. Being an Apostle was not his idea, but God's. He didn't appoint himself. That appointment came from God's selection and sovereign hand. He says this much in his letter to the Galatians:

¹ Paul, an apostle (not sent from men nor through the agency of man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead) (Galatians 1:1).

Never in a million years did Saul think he would become Paul, a Jew who converted to Christianity and we be consumed with telling fellow Jews they needed to repent. Never in a million years did Saul think he would become Paul, a Jew who converted to Christianity, and who would have a love and burning desire to see Gentiles become followers of the Messiah. Further, never in a million years did Paul ever think that the Messiah, whom he had shunned as he walked the earth and whose followers he was more than willing to eradicate, would ever chose him to be a sent one. Never. The grace was almost too much for his soul to even take in. Yes, when countless people saw the resurrected Lord for forty days after His time and space resurrection, he was busy killing people like them. Yet, despite the darkness of his religious soul, that Savior, that Messiah, stopped down from heaven and chose Saul, of all people, for a divine mission.

What a way to introduce himself to the Roman Church. First, he tells them that he's simply a simple man sold out to Jesus, the Christ. Second, he tells them he is, by God's mercy and grace, an Apostle to the Church at large. Surely, with credentials like this they would have wanted to see and hear from him.

How can we gain spiritual insight from this since there are not Apostles anymore? We can look at the essence of the word *apostle* and find much to contemplate. Jesus is still in the business of choosing saints to send them on divine errands. Perhaps a prayer is in order over your life, "Lord, I am your follower. Where do you want to send me with your gospel? Who do you

want to send me to? I am ready, willing, and waiting to hear from you. Speak and I will go. All of this reminds me of the old hymn we sang as I grew up:

I can hear my Savior calling,
I can hear my Savior calling,
I can hear my Savior calling,
“Take thy cross and follow, follow Me.”

Refrain:

Where He leads me I will follow,
Where He leads me I will follow,
Where He leads me I will follow,
I'll go with Him, with Him all the way.⁹

⁹Ernest W. Blandy, *Where He Leads Me*, 1890.