

NOTES ON ROMANSOutline from *The Epistle to the Romans* by Alva J. McClain**INTRODUCTION (1:1-17)**

Romans was written by Paul probably from Corinth between 55 and 58 A.D. (Schreiner, 4). When we compare the epistle to the book of Acts we see that during Paul's third missionary journey, after he had spent two years in Ephesus (Acts 19:10, 21–22), he stated that he wanted to go to Rome. However, he planned on first going to Macedonia and Achaia, and then Jerusalem. It appears from Romans 15:26 that he did go to Macedonia and Achaia for he mentions that the churches there had contributed to the poor in Jerusalem.

As we read Romans, we discover that the church was comprised of both Jewish and Gentile (non-Jewish) believers. The Gentiles seemed to be the dominant group, for Paul showed little evidence of the church leaning toward Judaism. If anything, it appears that in chapters 14 and 15 there was more danger of the Gentiles oppressing their Jewish brothers than vice versa.

A. Salutation (1:1-7)

Paul did not start the church in Rome, nor had he yet visited it. Therefore, he says in verse 1 three things about himself to establish his credentials: (1) he is a servant of Jesus Christ, (2) he is an apostle and, (3) he is separated for the gospel of God.

1. Paul's self-designations (1:1)**1:1 Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God,**

First, Paul calls himself a servant of Christ Jesus.

The word "servant" in Greek can also be translated as "slave" or "bondservant."

The Bible assumes that all men are enslaved to sin (Ro. 6:16; 7:5) since they are unable to act beyond the confines of their sin nature (Jn. 8:34).

When a slave was on the market, he was placed on the block and auctioned off to the highest bidder. Once purchased, the slave served his new owner. This purchase and transfer of ownership underlies the basic idea behind the word "redemption." When Christ redeemed us, He bought us from the trading floor and made us His own (1 Pet. 1:18). He rescued us from the powers which aimed to subjugate us and isolate us from the life of God (Ro. 6:17-18). In sum, Christians are slaves of Christ because He bought us by dying for us. We are no longer slaves to sin but have become His possession and are under His care. Being a slave of Christ doesn't imply an unwilling attachment to a master, but involves the joy of knowing that we are His and that we have been freed from sin to do His will. In 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 Paul says, "You are not your own. For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body."

Servant terminology parallels the language already established in the OT where a number of individuals (Moses, Joshua, Abraham, David, the prophets, and the nation of Israel – Exo. 14:31; Josh.14:7; 24:29; 2 Ki. 17:23; Psa. 89:3, 20; Isa. 41:8) are called Yahweh's (the Lord's) servants. The emphasis is on giving

service to a greater authority. The application of the term to Christ's followers is even more appropriate considering that Christ is called Yahweh in a number of NT passages.

Paul also says that he was called as an apostle.

The word "apostle" is a transliteration of the Greek "*apostolos*" (ἀπόστολος). In a very general sense *apostolos* (ἀπόστολος) refers to "one sent on a mission" (Jn. 13:16). The disciples were called apostles when Christ *sent them out* to preach (Lk. 6:13 & 9:1); however, *apostolos* (ἀπόστολος) was also a technical term for a select group of gifted individuals who:

- (1) had seen the resurrected Lord (Acts 1:21-22; 1 Cor. 9:1; I Cor. 15:8-9; and Paul's conversion in Acts. 9:15)
- (2) were personally commissioned by Christ to be His representatives
- (3) performed miracles that accompanied their claim (2 Cor. 12:12)

Romans 1:1 says Paul was "called [by God] to be an apostle." This is a passive idea – Paul didn't decide to be an apostle – God chose him (Gal. 1:1, 15-17; Ro. 11:11).

The office of apostleship held much greater authority than that of NT prophets or teachers. It was comparable to the authority of the OT prophet. This is the office to which Paul is referring.

Lastly, Paul says he was set apart for the gospel.

By saying that he was *set apart* Paul emphasizes that his interests and attachments to all other things have been cut off and he has sole allegiance to proclaiming the gospel and living by its principles. The word "set apart" is used by God when calling Israel from among the nations (Lev. 20:26) and setting apart individuals for service (Acts 13:2).

So at the outset of his letter, Paul wants to assure his readers of his utter submission and devotion to the will of Jesus as His servant. Yet, he also wants them to know that he speaks with authority for he has been set apart and commissioned by God as an apostle.

Lastly, the end of verse 1 tells us that Paul was made a servant, set apart, and called for one specific reason – "the gospel of God." "Gospel" means good news. Its content is found in I Corinthians 15:1-4. The Gospel is God's own good news for a fallen world – it is the gospel of God.

2. The Gospel of God (1:2-3)

**. . . the gospel of God,
1:2 which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures,**

V. 2 is parenthetical but explains that the gospel Paul preached was not something new. It had been promised beforehand by the prophets in the OT Scriptures (see 1:17; 3:21; 4:3, 6ff.; 16:26 for elaborations of this comment).

3. The Son of God (1:3-5)

. . . the gospel of God

1:3 concerning His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh,

1:4 who was appointed the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord,

1:5 through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the nations, for His name's sake,

V. 2 was a parenthesis; vv. 3-4 introduce the reader to the substance of the gospel that Paul preached. The gospel is the *gospel of God* (1:1); that is, God is the source of the gospel. The content of the gospel is centered on the Son; it is “concerning God’s Son” (1:3). The Son is then described with two relative clauses:

He is the Son who was born of a descendant of David.

He is the Son who was appointed the Son of God with power by the resurrection.

God’s Son was born of the seed of David according to the flesh.

This accords with Jewish expectations that a ruler would come from David's line (2 Sam. 7:12-16; Isa. 11:1-5, 10; Jer. 23:5-6; 33:14-17; Ezek. 34:23-24; 37:24-25). Davidic sonship is a necessary qualification for the messiah.

God’s Son was appointed the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead.

Although most translations read, “the Son . . . who is declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection,” it is now almost universally accepted that the word translated as “declared” means “to appoint,” “to determine,” or “to fix” (see its seven other NT uses – Lk. 22:22; Acts 2:23; 10:42; 11:29; 17:26, 31; Heb. 4:7). Jesus wasn’t declared to be the Son of God; He was appointed as the Son of God.

In order to understand how the one who is called the Son can be appointed as the Son of God, we first need to understand sonship in the Bible and specifically how it is used of Christ.

“Son of God” is an expression that most Christians never fully comprehend.

When we seek to understand the meaning of words and expressions in the Bible we need to take into account how they were used in the culture in which they appeared, and how the people of that time would have understood them. This is certainly true of the concept of sonship and the idiom “Son of God” in the Bible.

When we think of the word “son” we think in terms of DNA, of physical descent, but in the ancient world “son” had a much broader semantic range than that. The expression “son of God” (or, the concept of sonship) was variously applied in the Bible:

- (a) to the people of Israel as a whole – Exo. 4:22; Deut. 1:31; 32:6; Jer. 31:9, 20; Hos. 11:1
- (b) to pious people in general – Psalms 73:15; Proverbs 14:26
- (c) to angels – Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7
- (d) to the kings of the house of David – 2 Sam. 7:14; Psalms 2:7
- (e) to Christ – Romans 1:5; Luke 22:70

(f) to Christians – Gal. 3:26; 4:6

The expression “son of God” comes from a rich background of Hebrew history and culture. In the ancient world probably 95% or more of the children went into the same vocation as their parents. If your father was a farmer, you were a farmer. If your father was a shepherd, you would become a shepherd and so would all your brothers. Thus, your identity as a son was also a vocational identity. *Who you were was bound up to what you did.* That’s why Jesus was repeatedly identified as the carpenter’s son (Matt. 13:55); His identity was tied to His father’s vocation. In Mark 6:3 when His father had died, Jesus was then called the carpenter. His father’s identity became His own.

Culture influences language and language influences culture. The effect of the culture identifying a son by his vocation resulted in a lot of “son of ___” idioms that were used to express functional or behavioral categories. Thus, a wicked man might be called “a son of wickedness” (Ps. 89:22), people in trouble are “sons of affliction” (Prov. 31:5 – in Hebrew), valorous men are “sons of valor” (Deut. 3:18 – in Hebrew), and those deserving execution are “sons of death” (I Sam. 26:16 – in Hebrew). In Matthew 5:9 Jesus said, “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.” A peacemaker is called a son of God because peacemaking *is functioning* like God who is the supreme peacemaker; thus, a peacemaker demonstrates that he is part of the “God family,” at least in the sphere of peacemaking.

John 8 is particularly instructional in how father/son terminology was used. Jesus was talking to the crowds when eventually the discussion turned to ancestry.

Jesus said,

37 "I know that you are Abraham's descendants; yet you seek to kill Me, because My word has no place in you.

38 "I speak the things which I have seen with My Father; therefore you also do the things which you heard from your father."

39 They answered and said to Him, "Abraham is our father." Jesus said to them, "If you are Abraham's children, do the deeds of Abraham.

40 "But as it is, you are seeking to kill Me, a man who has told you the truth, which I heard from God; this Abraham did not do.

Notice that when the Jews claimed that Abraham was their father the first thing that Jesus did was to compare their behavior to Abraham’s. He said if Abraham is your father, *do the deeds of Abraham* (Jn. 8:39).

Who you are is bound up to what you do. If they were Abraham’s sons they would do what Abraham did. Abraham listened to the truth of God. As Jesus was speaking, the truth of God was being mediated through Him, but the Jews didn’t listen to it. Therefore, Jesus concluded that Abraham could not be their father.

The Jews then switched gears and said, “God is our Father” (Jn. 8:41). Jesus replied that that can’t be true either: “If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and have come from God” (Jn. 8:42).

Finally, Jesus told them who their father was: “You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning” (Jn. 8:44).

Note that there is nothing in this conversation that has to do with actual fatherhood and sonship. When Jesus told the Jews that they were not Abraham's children, He was not denying the physical descent of the Israelites from Abraham. Nor was Jesus saying that Satan had somehow literally fathered them. Rather, He was speaking of sonship as a functional category. Their behavior identified what "family" they belonged to; their actions revealed who their "father" was. They were sons of the devil because of the way they acted. Satan was murderous and so were they. Paul follows this same line of thought when he says that the true sons of Abraham are not those who have Abraham's genes; they are those who have Abraham's faith; they act like Abraham.

This is the first step in understanding sonship language in the Bible; father/son terminology could be used to describe a behavioral category. In that culture if the father was a mason, all the boys in the family would be masons. If someone was a shepherd, it was inconceivable that he was part of the mason's family. In the same way, if someone did what Abraham did, he was grouped with Abraham's family and could be called a son of Abraham. But if he acted like Satan, it was inconceivable that his father was anyone *but* Satan; he was therefore seen as a member of the "Satan-family."

It involves taking a few more steps to understand what the expression "Son of God" means in relation to Christ.

The first passage of importance is the Davidic Covenant in 2 Samuel 7. The historical context of the passage is as follows: David had been king for 7 years. He had just made Jerusalem the capital, built his home there, and brought the tabernacle into the city. When he compared the beauty of his own home to the tabernacle (the dwelling place of God) he desired to build a gorgeous temple to replace it. Nathan, the prophet, said to the king, "Go, do all that is in your mind, for the LORD is with you." But God had different plans.

In vv. 4-7 it says:

4 But in the same night the word of the LORD came to Nathan, saying,
5 "Go and say to My servant David, 'Thus says the LORD, "Are you the one who should build Me a house to dwell in?"
6 "For I have not dwelt in a house since the day I brought up the sons of Israel from Egypt, even to this day; but I have been moving about in a tent, even in a tabernacle.
7 "Wherever I have gone with all the sons of Israel, did I speak a word with one of the tribes of Israel, which I commanded to shepherd My people Israel, saying, 'Why have you not built Me a house of cedar?'"

God would not allow David to build a house (a temple) for Him. But in a play on words, God told David, "the LORD will make a *house* for you" (2 Sam. 7:11b). The *house* God would build for David was not a dwelling place; it was a dynasty.

God continued:

12 "When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you (Solomon), who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom (God would form David's dynasty through his son, Solomon).

13 "He shall build a house for My name (Solomon would build the temple for God), and I will establish the throne of his kingdom (the dynasty) forever.

Then, "son language" appears in v.14.

14 "I will be a father to him and he will be a son to Me; when he commits iniquity, I will correct him with the rod of men and the strokes of the sons of men,

Two things are important to notice. (1) V. 14 is not speaking about Christ, but of Solomon, as the latter half of the verse makes clear. (2) The notion of sonship is bound up to the idea of being a Davidic king. This is not difficult to understand when you understand how "son" language functions in Scripture. God is the supreme king over Israel. When God chose a king under Him, that king was supposed to act like God. Just as the beatitudes said that if you act like God by being a peacemaker you are called a son of God, so (thinking in reverse) if you are a king who is called a son of God, you are expected to act like God in the way you rule.

Because the expectation of a Davidic king was that he should be someone who ruled like God, the title "son of God" was applied to each king in the line of David when they ascended to the throne. Psalm 2, an enthronement Psalm, demonstrates this. In Psalm 2:6 as the king is being enthroned, God decrees, "I have installed My king upon Zion, My holy mountain." Then in the next verse the king declares, "I will surely tell of the decree of the LORD: He said to Me, 'You are My Son, Today I have begotten You.'" (Psa. 2:7) As with the other idioms for sonship there is no literal begetting taking place at all. Rather, sonship terminology established the baseline for a king's manner of rule – the king should exercise integrity, establish justice, rule with righteousness, point the people toward the covenant and the law, etc., just as God, the Supreme King, would do.

At this point of history there is nothing miraculous. Just as Israel could be called the son of God, so the king was called the son of God, since both were to act like their Father.

In the Davidic Covenant, God promises David that through Solomon his dynasty would endure forever (2 Sam. 7:13, 16). There are only two ways that this could come to pass: (1) There would be multiple heirs without end. Or (2) an heir would come who would be eternal. There is no hint of the latter in this passage and there was no reason for anyone to think that it was even a possibility.

The Davidic Covenant in 2 Samuel 7:11b-17 was given to David in the 10th century BC. In the 8th century BC, Isaiah the prophet was warning the nation about the impending judgment of God and exile. Yet in Isaiah 9:6-7 he speaks words of hope of a coming heir to the Davidic throne.

Isaiah 9:6-7

6 For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders; and His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.

7 There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness From then on and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this.

Isaiah says there will be one who will sit “on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from then on and forevermore.” But when we read verse 6 we find that the ruler is conflated with God Himself! He is the Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace!

God had promised that the line of David would continue forever in 2 Samuel 7, but He did not explain *how* it would continue. David most likely assumed that it would continue as a succession of heirs perpetually, but then in the 8th century the prophet Isaiah tells us that there will be a specific heir to the Davidic throne who will sit on the throne forever. And the one who will rule bears the titles of God!

Now we move to the 6th century BC to the Book of Ezekiel, chapter 34. God tells Ezekiel to prophesy against the rulers (the shepherds) of the nation. Ezekiel says,

2b ‘Thus says the Lord GOD, “Woe, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flock?”

3 “You eat the fat and clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fat sheep without feeding the flock.

4 “Those who are sickly you have not strengthened, the diseased you have not healed, the broken you have not bound up, the scattered you have not brought back, nor have you sought for the lost; but with force and with severity you have dominated them.

5 “They were scattered for lack of a shepherd, and they became food for every beast of the field and were scattered.

In the verses that follow God declares that He will shepherd His people.

11 For thus says the Lord GOD, “Behold, I Myself will search for My sheep and seek them out.

12 “As a shepherd cares for his herd in the day when he is among his scattered sheep, so I will care for My sheep and will deliver them from all the places to which they were scattered on a cloudy and gloomy day.

13 “I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries and bring them to their own land; and I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the streams, and in all the inhabited places of the land.

14 “I will feed them in a good pasture, and their grazing ground will be on the mountain heights of Israel. There they will lie down on good grazing ground and feed in rich pasture on the mountains of Israel.

15 “I will feed My flock and I will lead them to rest,” declares the Lord GOD.

16 “I will seek the lost, bring back the scattered, bind up the broken and strengthen the sick; but the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them with judgment.

But then, suddenly out of nowhere, in vv. 23 and 24 God says David will be their shepherd.

23 “Then I will set over them one shepherd, My servant David, and he will feed them; he will feed them himself and be their shepherd.

24 “And I, the LORD, will be their God, and My servant David will be prince among them; I the LORD have spoken.

David was dead so it is clear that the prophet is speaking typologically. There will be a “David” who is of the Davidic line that will outstrip the Davidic kings and shepherd God’s people forever as God’s agent of rule.

Whenever we read about sonship in the NT we always need to remind ourselves that the expression is feeding off of these different OT backgrounds that the reader is expected to already understand.

By the time we come to the NT a number of things have already been established. First, we know that the title “son of God” is used in many ways. It can denote the nation, angels, and individuals, but most importantly it is an expression tied to the Davidic king. When the king is declared to be the son of God, he is expected to do what God, the Supreme King, does. Secondly, we have seen that a specific Davidic King would arise who bears the titles of God (Isa. 9:6) and does the work of God (Ezek. 34:23). Thirdly, we have seen that the Davidic line will be perpetual because one who is eternal will rule on the throne (Isa. 9:6-7). Lastly, in Ezekiel 34, God states that the day will come when He will shepherd (rule) His people, but He will do so through the agency of another whom He calls “My Servant David.”

So how does all of this apply to Christ? I would argue that in relation to Jesus the title “Son of God” is primarily a messianic title referring to His right to rule on the Davidic throne forever. However, He is also specifically said to be a Davidic king who is called God. Thus, the title “son” when applied to Christ could fit any of the above OT categories depending on what the NT author wanted to draw out.

For example, in Hebrews 1:2 it says that in these last days God has spoken to us *through His Son*. The Son is then described as the one through whom God made the world. He is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power (Heb.1:3). The thoughts are similar to John 1:1-5 where the Word is called God. In this case “Son” is synonymous to “God.” The emphasis is from Isaiah 9:6 where the Davidic king is called “Mighty God.”

In John 5 Jesus had been accused of breaking the law by healing a man on the Sabbath. He responded in John 5:17 by saying, “My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working.” The Jews then wanted to kill Him for He “was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God.”

How could the Jews draw such conclusions from what Jesus had said?

When Jesus said, “My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working,” He was arguing that God was His Father. As the Son, He was doing the same work as His Father; so whatever Sabbath exemptions applied to God, applied to Him as well.

In verse 19 Jesus explains that “the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner” (Jn. 5:19). The implication is that Jesus’ work on the Sabbath was the Father’s work on the Sabbath. If Jesus had sinned so had the Father for Jesus was only doing what His Father does. This is tantamount to claiming to be God for only God can do what God does. If Jesus does what God does, how is He distinguishable from God? The Jews understood the implications and wanted to kill Him for “making Himself equal with God.”

So in the above two examples of Father/Son imagery, sonship is pointing to His deity. However, that is not always the case.

In regard to Christ, “Son of God” is most commonly used as a messianic title; it is a reference to His Davidic kingship. There are many clear examples of this. When questioned by the High Priest at His trial, Jesus was asked, “Tell us whether You are the Christ, the Son of God” (Matt. 26:63). In his question, “the Christ” (the Messiah) and “the Son of God” are used as synonyms. Likewise, in Luke 22, when Jesus applied a messianic psalm to Himself (Psa. 110) “they all said, ‘Are You the Son of God, then?’” (Lk. 22:69-70). In John 1:49 Nathanael said, “Rabbi, You are the Son of God; You are the King of Israel.” In John 11:27, before Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, Martha said to Jesus, “I have believed that You are the Christ, the Son of God, even He who comes into the world.” In John 20:31 the apostle tells us, “these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.” Hebrews 1:5 says, “For to which of the angels did He ever say, ‘You are my Son, today I have begotten You?’ and again, ‘I will be a Father to Him and He shall be a Son to Me?’” These are clearly the words of the enthronement of the Davidic King found in 2 Samuel 7:14 that are repeated in Psalm 2:7. The author’s point is that Jesus is greater than angels because He is the great Davidic King; that was something that can never be claimed by any angel.

We can now come back to Romans 1:3-4. Paul writes that the gospel is concerning God’s Son who was made a descendant of David according to the flesh, and who was appointed the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead.

“In this passage, we must remember that the Son is the subject of the entire statement in vv. 3-4: It is the Son who is ‘appointed’ Son. . . The tautologous nature of this statement reveals that being appointed Son doesn’t have anything to do with a *change in essence* – as if a person or human messiah became the Son of God for the first time – but with *change in status or function*” (Moo, 48,49).

These verses show that there were successive stages in Jesus’ messianic work. First, a change in existence took place (Phil. 2); the Son “came” into the Davidic line. This was a clear indication of His messianic stature (Moo, 46). However, it should also be observed that the title “Son” is applied to Christ before the incarnation; it is a title that applies to Him in His eternal pre-existence and defines His relationship to the Father (Murray, 5). In Jesus’ earthly ministry the Son experienced the weaknesses and humility of humanity. However, at the resurrection Jesus entered into another stage in His ministry. It was then that He was appointed the “Son of God *in power*.” The key in understanding this is in the connection of “in power” to “Son of God.” Jesus was the Messiah before the resurrection, but at the resurrection He was enthroned *with power* as the messianic king. Ephesians 1:20-22 says that when God raised Him from the dead He seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places “far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And He put all things in subjection under His feet.”

To state it differently, verse 3 is saying that Jesus, the eternal Son, was made a descendant of David. As a descendant of David He subjected Himself to the historical conditions of humanity (“according to the flesh” stresses the weak, transitory, fragile nature of human existence, Moo, 47 – cf. Phil. 2:9-11). When He rose from the dead, however, *He was appointed to a new and more powerful position in relation to the world* as the Son of God. He moved from a state of humility and was appointed to a place of power and sovereignty (cf. Acts 2:32-36, Eph. 1:20-23; I Pet. 3:21-22; F.F. Bruce, Romans, 72). “This appointment as *God’s Son in power* expresses the same idea found in Acts 2:36, where God exalted Jesus as Lord and Christ at the resurrection” (Schreiner, New Testament Theology, 321, 322). Paul also connects the resurrection of Christ with His installation as God’s Son by citing Psalm 2:7 in Acts 13:33.

In verse 4 Paul says that Jesus was raised “*according to the spirit of holiness.*” This is a difficult expression that has a number of interpretations:

- 1) The “spirit of holiness” could be a Semitism for the Holy Spirit (i.e. the regular way of saying Holy Spirit in Hebrew), though this expression for the Holy Spirit doesn’t appear anywhere else in the NT (F.F. Bruce, *Romans*, 73).
- 2) Because there is an obvious contrast between “according to the flesh” and “according to the spirit” it may be better to see this as the state of the existence into which Christ entered at the resurrection. The same Son of God who appeared in a state of humiliation as a descendant of David according to the flesh is now in a state of glory according to the spirit. On earth His existence was related to flesh, now it is related to spirit, as an existence of power that corresponds to His lordship (F.F. Bruce, *Romans*, 73; Murray, *Romans*, 11).
- 3) A third view sees this as referring to Christ’s divine nature – the human (according to the flesh) and the divine (according to the spirit). That is, “according to the flesh” He is human, the “seed of David,” but according to the spirit of holiness, or His divine nature, He is “the Son of God” (McClain, *Romans*, 40).

In vv. 4b-5 Paul describes the Son as “Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom we have received grace and apostleship.” Christ is the channel of grace and the source of Paul’s apostleship (Jn. 1:14-17; Eph. 4:10-11). In other words, it is through Christ that grace and apostleship come.

Furthermore, Paul states that Christ gave the gift of apostleship to him “to bring about the obedience of faith among all the nations, for His name’s sake” (1:5b). Acceptance of the gospel in faith can be described as an act of obedience (Schreiner, 35). The goal of Paul’s preaching was to bring people to faith. The inclusion of *all* with “nations” functions as an indication that the covenantal promises of the Old Testament to the nations were being fulfilled (Gen. 12:3; Isa. 19: 18-25; 49:6; Dan. 7:14, 21). The gospel is for all people of every culture, gender, age, race, social status, and religion.

Lastly, the ultimate focus of his ministry was for “His name’s sake.” The nearest antecedent to “His” is Christ. Paul does not minister for personal gain or for the sake of those who are saved. Ultimately, all he does is for the glory of Christ. The glory of Christ is the undergirding motivation that sustained his ministry.

4. The Church of God (1:6-7)

1:6 among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ;

1:7 to all who are beloved of God in Rome, called as saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

“Among whom you were also called” ties the believers in Rome to the gospel that is for “all nations” in the previous verse; they were examples of the fruit that was being borne through the proclamation of the gospel among the Gentiles. Paul’s official connection to the Gentile church in Rome was in his apostolic mission to the Gentiles in general (cf. Acts 26:17-18; Gal. 1:16; 2:7-9).

In vv. 6 and 7 when Paul describes the Roman Christians he doesn’t focus on what they do, but on what God does: they are (1) called of Christ Jesus, (2) beloved of God, and (3) called as saints.

Called of Christ Jesus. Believers are “called” for a number of purposes. Paul was called to a specific ministry – to be an apostle (Ro. 1:1). But we are also called to salvation. The Bible makes it clear that people do not seek God (Ro. 3:10-12) or decide to believe by their own power (Jn. 1:12-13). Rather, God calls mankind to salvation and everyone He calls responds in faith (Ro. 8:28-30; for further reading see my notes on “Predestination and Salvation”). Those in Rome were called for obedience to the faith just as others among the nations were. In this case, “of Christ Jesus” indicates that God has called us into fellowship with His Son. In 1 Corinthians 1:9 Paul speaks of God’s calling in this way; “God, who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful.” The Gospel is (1) about Jesus (Ro. 1:3 it is “concerning His Son”, 1 Cor. 1:23; 2:2; Acts 2:36) and (2) it is about us being brought into a relationship with Him.

Beloved of God. This is not the general love of God that offers eternal life to the world (Jn. 3:16), nor is it the sustaining love of God that gives sun and rain even to his enemies (Matt. 5:44-45). This is the love of God for His bride, His chosen people. He calls us from death to life, and He keeps us from falling away (Ro. 8:29-30). To be called “beloved” by God is the great distinction and blessedness of believers. It “points to the intimacy and tenderness of the love of God the Father, the embrace of his people in the bosom of His affection.” (Murray, Romans, 15).

Called as saints. The word “saint” is literally “holy one,” meaning “one set apart” by God. Although we still sin as Christians, when we place our faith in Christ we are called “saints.” Being a saint is not something to be achieved in the future; it is what we are now. Since we are set apart by God, we should live in accordance with what God has declared us to be.