

## THE CHRISTIAN'S CALL TO COMMITMENT

**Rom. 1:1** Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called [κλητός] to be an apostle, separated [*'severed'*, *Bishop's NT (1595)*] unto the gospel of God,<sup>2</sup> (Which he had promised afore [*προεπαγγέλλομαι*, *announced before*] by his prophets in the holy scriptures,) <sup>3</sup> Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord [*His Divinity*], which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh [*His Humanity*]; <sup>4</sup> And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead: <sup>5</sup> By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name: <sup>6</sup> Among whom are ye also the called [κλητός] of Jesus Christ: <sup>7</sup> To all that be in Rome, beloved [*ἀγαπητός*] of God, called [κλητός] to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

At the footnote, on the end of Rom. 16, we are informed the epistle was written c. 57 AD from Corinth, during Paul's third missionary journey, and delivered to the church in Rome by a lady called Phoebe from Cenchrea, a port on the eastern side of Corinth. Phoebe ("radiant") was a respected member of the church, who Paul refers to as a διάκονος (Rom. 16:1) ... 'shammash' (CJB), 'minister' (DBY), 'ministerio' (Vul), 'servant' (GNV, AV).

Rome was the most important, the most powerful, and the most influential city in the Empire. It was ethnically diverse, - all roads led to Rome, - with a population of around one million people, living in an area of less than ten square miles. The church was most likely started by Jews and proselytes who had been in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:10), they had heard Peter's Gospel message, were converted, returned to Rome and established a church.

It was a church Paul had not visited, although he intended to, **Rom. 1:8** First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world. <sup>9</sup> For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers; <sup>10</sup> Making request, if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you. <sup>11</sup> For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established; <sup>12</sup> That is, that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me. <sup>13</sup> Now I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that oftentimes I purposed to come unto you, (but was let hitherto,) that I might have some fruit among you also, even as among other Gentiles. <sup>14</sup> I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise. <sup>15</sup> So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also.

There were no particular issues he had to deal with, - as, for example, he had in Corinth, Philippi, Galatia, and Colosse. He took the opportunity, instead, to

teach them concerning the doctrine of salvation (chs. 1-11). He then followed by giving them some practical application (chs. 12-16).

He began simply, humbly, and personally, **Rom. 1:1 Paul ... No fancy title ... simply, Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ ...** Regarding the word ‘servant’. In Rom. 16:1, Phoebe was described as a ‘servant’ (διάκονος) ... Phoebe was indeed a servant, διάκονος. The word does not necessarily imply any official status within the church, such as an office-bearer because that would have contradicted Paul’s teaching to Timothy, for Paul referred to how the ‘deacon’, - the office-bearer in the church, - had to be the husband of one wife (I Tim. 3:12). ... However, Phoebe was held in such high regard that the more common use of the term was applied to her.

Furthermore, Paul also described himself as a ‘servant’. The word he uses, though, is not διάκονος ... instead, it is the word for a slave, δοῦλος ... a ‘slave’ who is purchased and redeemed by his Master. ... And as a slave, he was privileged to be *called* ... *called* in two ways. He was first of all, *called* to salvation, **6 Among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ ...** and secondly, he acknowledged the Lord’s claim upon his life. ... He was called to salvation, and he was also called to serve.

The word ‘called’ (κλητός) came to be a part of a word used to describe the early church, the ‘called-out ones’ (ἐκκλησία), - those whom God chose and separated unto Himself. ... And Paul emphasised this calling which also included his separation (**II Cor. 5:17 Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.**). The word for ‘separation’ (ἀφορίζω) means that you are ‘marked off from others’ ... a ‘line of demarcation’ sets you apart and renders you distinct. ... That is the consequence of God saving you. He placed a sign over you, **Is. 43:1 for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine.** ... You are marked with the ‘earnest’, - the seal, - of the Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:13,14)

And that is how Paul explained himself as being the property of God. God had paid a price to purchase him so that he did not belong to himself ... and the great price God had paid was at the cost of His Son at Calvary. ... Paul was writing to these Christians in Rome, and he began with a clear definition of the Gospel. ... No doubt they had heard of him, and they would have been hoping for a visit from him ... He was one of the most influential Christians, and yet he was simply saying to them, I am a humble servant/slave of the wonderful God Who saved me and called me away from what I once was, and He separated me unto

Himself and gave me the privilege to serve Him ... and my message is simply always this, <sup>3</sup>Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

He had no interest in preaching any other gospel, or in trying to keep up with the fanciful stories of the pagan gods of Rome. He simply wanted to honour and speak of the God of Heaven Who sent His Son into this world, Who was made of the seed of David according to the flesh

And that was his Gospel. He saw no need to change it or adapt it to make it sound more appealing. He simply preached it as it was ... and how he was saved through its message, separated through its outworking, and instructed to write this epistle to the Roman believers.

Their knowledge about the Gospel would have been quite limited, because they had restricted resources at their disposal. There was a young church, in its early stages. They had many questions for which they were looking answers, and very few reliable people to give them accurate answers. No doubt, the church would have been studying intently the contents of the message brought back to Rome by those who had heard Peter preach in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost. They would have dissected the message, and searched through the Old Testament to corroborate what they had heard. The Old Testament was the only 'holy Scriptures' of that time, and Paul wrote this letter to them to 'feed their appetite' and help them to discover more.

There was a large Jewish population in Rome, - between 30,000 and 40,000 ... and there could have been the strong attraction for many of the converted Jews to return to Judaism, or at least, to adopt a 'Judaized' form of Christianity, such as was adopted by some of the people in Galatia. Therefore, the Christians needed to know the sure foundations of their faith ... and how the written word presented *the Living Word*. ... That Living Word ... Jesus Christ, the Saviour, the Son of God, the Messiah, Who <sup>3</sup>was made of the seed of David according to the flesh, - ... perfectly and miraculously formed in His mother's womb, to the glory of His eternal Father.

And Paul also showed how Jesus, - in His life on earth, - presented the power and presence of God through *the spirit of holiness* to all who met Him ... and how His work was irrevocably confirmed by *the resurrection from the dead* ... And that was why Paul had no other message, but Christ. His burden was for the saints to be edified and the sinners to be saved. ... And as a Jew, God had placed upon him the responsibility to preach Christ to Gentiles ... and Rome was full of

them! ... <sup>5</sup> By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among *all nations*, for his name: <sup>6</sup> Among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ.

He had a flame burning inside to travel far and wide preaching Christ. He had no other message to convey for that *alone* was what God had saved him, separated him, and sent him to do.

In the context of our own setting, *that* continues to be our purpose ... The 'baton' has been passed on to God's people today, and we are responsible for our part here in the opportunities God grants to us. We have been saved and separated in order to be sent with the simple message *Jesus saves*.

On Monday morning we had the opportunity to present the Gospel to the elderly folk. That is an opportunity the Lord opened for us. ... On Tuesday evening, I was with the cadets ... and they will be coming here on Sunday morning. ... That is another opportunity the Lord opened for us. Those elderly folk on Monday morning will probably not hear the Gospel until we next visit them. Some might have *gone* by then. ... And the young people who come out on Sunday morning probably won't be inside a church until the next Carol Service ... We have a duty to the Lord to present His Son as the only means of salvation when He sets the opportunities before us. ... We are saved to serve, and we are converted to be committed ... and what a responsibility we have in these days!