



# COMPELLED

The transforming power of the gospel compels believers to share it with others.

## **ROMANS 1:1-7,13-17**

Think about the milestones in our lives. We have parties on our birthdays. We send invitations to our weddings. We announce the births of our children. It's natural to share life-changing moments. Celebrations are better when others join in. Our salvation changed our lives in ways no other milestone could. But let's be honest; it's tempting to keep it to ourselves. Paul didn't want that for the Romans. He wanted them to embrace the gospel and share it with others.

***What was the last major milestone you celebrated? How did you mark that event?***

# UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

## ROMANS 1:1-17

Unlike the recipients of other Pauline letters, the apostle had not established the church in Rome and had not met the membership when he wrote the epistle. While he acknowledged a desire to meet them face-to-face, the connection had not happened (Rom. 1:9-12). Apparently, Paul was planning a new missionary journey to Spain and would stop by Rome in transit. Instead, Paul made his way to Rome in a much different way. Luke explained in the Book of Acts that Paul entered Rome as a prisoner and lived there under house arrest until his trial before Caesar (Acts 28:11-31).

In addition to being the longest of Paul's letters, Romans also stands out as one of the most intensely theological letters. Throughout the first half of the letter (chaps. 1–8), Paul outlined an orderly, logical theology of salvation. He began by establishing the sinful nature of humanity and our need for a Savior. He then shared why Christ is the only hope for sinful people and ended the section with an assurance of God's love and presence in the lives of believers.

After a section related to the salvation of Israel in chapters 9–11, the remainder of the letter addresses practical matters based on the theology presented earlier. Paul recognized that a new relationship with Christ required a new set of ethical standards. The individuals who make up the church must act differently from the world around them. Such behavior draws others to the Savior.

Romans 1:1-17 sets the stage for the teaching to come over the next few chapters. Paul wanted his readers to focus on the power of the gospel. Personally, he was not ashamed of what God had done in his life through the gospel, and he embraced his role as a messenger of the good news. By way of the gospel, unbelievers realize God's righteousness and His offer of salvation.

***Read Romans 1:1-7,13-17 in your Bible. Reflect on how Paul described Christ in these verses. How does that compare to how you tend to think of Jesus?***

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# EXPLORE THE TEXT

## THE GOSPEL DESCRIBED (ROM. 1:1-7)

<sup>1</sup> Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, <sup>2</sup> which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, <sup>3</sup> concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh <sup>4</sup> 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, <sup>5</sup> 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, <sup>6</sup> including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ, <sup>7</sup> To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints:

### VERSES 1-4

Paul identified himself as the writer and used three phrases to describe his credentials. First, he was **a servant of Christ Jesus**. The Greek term here can also be translated “slave.” Paul was completely surrendered to the will of his Master. This image would have made an impact on his readers, since a large portion of Rome’s population was made up of slaves.

Paul then identified himself as **an apostle**. The word *apostle* means “one who is sent.” It carried a sense of authority but also highlighted God’s mission for Paul. Finally, he wrote that he was **set apart for the gospel**. Paul recognized that he had been selected by God to share the message of hope and salvation around the world. This idea of being set apart also relates to the Christian concept of sanctification. In that sense, God has set every believer apart to represent Him in the world—not just those called to “vocational ministry.”

### THE THEME OF ROMANS

The gospel is the power of God for salvation and radically changes the lives of all who put their faith in Christ Jesus (1:16). Paul’s passion for the gospel is seen from the opening verse to the closing of the letter. He had been set apart to proclaim the gospel to unbelievers (1:1); the same gospel would strengthen believers in Rome (16:25).

After sharing the nature of his ministry, Paul elaborated on the nature of the gospel itself. First, he noted that the gospel had been ***promised beforehand***. Humanity's need for a Savior did not catch God by surprise. The first promise of the Messiah came on the heels of Adam and Eve's fall in Eden (Gen. 3:15). The apostle Peter wrote that God planned to send Jesus before the foundation of the world (1 Pet. 1:20). The gospel was not some kind of "Plan B." It was rooted in the mind of God for eternity and fulfilled through the life, death, and resurrection of Christ.

The original promises came through the words of the ancient prophets in the Holy Scriptures. (See 2 Pet. 1:16-21.) Long before the birth of Jesus, God's messengers told His people that the Messiah was coming. Paul was continuing that long line of faithful proclamation, and we are heirs of his legacy today. Like the prophets and apostles, we are called to participate in sharing the gospel with those who are nearby and those who are on the other side of the world.

The gospel finds its power in Jesus. Paul made it clear that the prophetic promises pointed to Jesus and that Jesus was the only One who could fulfill those promises. He alone holds the two main qualities that give anyone the right to be called the Christ. First, Jesus is God's ***Son***. Jesus was God in flesh. This allowed Him to live a perfect, spotless life—which, in turn, allowed Him to become the perfect, sinless sacrifice. Second, Jesus was ***descended from David***. God had promised David the Messiah would come from his offspring. While retaining His divinity, Christ also became completely human.

It also should be noted that Paul referred to Jesus as ***our Lord***. Calling Jesus *Savior* relates to the forgiveness of sin. Calling Him *Lord* assumes the surrendering of a life. As believers, we are called to follow Christ, to be His disciples. Simply put, we are not in charge anymore.

The word ***declared*** in verse 4 could cause some confusion for the casual reader. On the surface, it sounds like deity was bestowed on Jesus at a certain point in time. However, this would deny the deity of Christ. Instead, it is better to understand Jesus' appointment as Son of God as a confirmation of Him as Savior. Through His life, preaching, and miracles, Jesus demonstrated to all who were paying attention that He really was the long-awaited Messiah. He did not become the Messiah, but He was the Messiah for eternity. The Holy Spirit's presence in Him added further evidence of His unique relationship with the Father in heaven.



The greatest confirmation of Jesus' position came through His resurrection. Jesus' resurrection removed all doubt about who He was and what He had come to accomplish. Without the resurrection, Jesus was simply a good teacher who died for a cause. Because of the resurrection, He reigns as Savior and Lord over all creation.

#### VERSES 5-6

Believers experience two things as the resurrection power of Christ begins to transform their lives. First, we receive His **grace**. God's grace can be defined as His undeserved favor. The second thing we receive is **apostleship**. While grace has to do with our redemption, apostleship has to do with our responsibility. As mentioned above, an apostle is one who is sent on a mission. Our relationship with Christ demands that we share His message with those around us. We are apostles in that we are sent out to be His hands and feet.

The result of God's grace and our apostleship should be seeing others become obedient to the faith. Paul reminded the Romans that they were among **the nations** who had received God's gift of salvation. They had been called by Jesus Christ because Jesus' redemption was not limited to a particular group. His offer is universal. We receive the same calling and privilege today. As heirs to this Gentile salvation, God also calls us to share the gospel.

#### VERSE 7

Paul offered his greetings to the Christians in Rome. But even as he identified the recipients of the letter, he continued to focus on Christ. He reminded them that they were **loved by God**. They are also **saints**, a term that emphasizes a call to holiness. God had set them apart, and they held a position in God's eyes that reflected that reality.

Finally, Paul used a common formula as an initial blessing for the Romans: **grace** and **peace** from **God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ**. This formula appears in almost all of Paul's letters. Genuine grace and peace are available only through a relationship with the Father through the Son.

**How did Paul understand his purpose in life? How did that purpose relate to the way Paul described Jesus to the Roman believers?**

## KEY DOCTRINE: *God the Father*

God is Father in truth to those who become children of God through faith in Jesus Christ (John 14:6-7).

### THE GOSPEL DEBT (ROM. 1:13-15)

<sup>13</sup> 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. <sup>14</sup> I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. <sup>15</sup> So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.

#### VERSE 13

Paul had friends who lived in Rome, but he had never spent time with the Roman congregation. Despite never seeing them face to face, he felt a special bond that led him to pray for them regularly and to plan a visit with them (Rom. 1:8-12).

Paul's affection for the Roman believers is evident in the phrase **brothers**. He recognized the family connection they shared through Christ and told the congregation that he had **often** planned to come to them but had been **prevented**.

The passage does not indicate what prevented Paul from coming. He mentioned in a letter to the Corinthians the demands of the churches he had planted (2 Cor. 11:28); perhaps that was what had prevented him from visiting Rome.

Paul's passion to visit Rome was rooted not only in the desire for fellowship but also in ministry. He believed he would **reap some harvest among** them with God's help.

#### VERSES 14-15

God called Paul to be an apostle to the Gentiles. Paul had remained faithful to that call. He mentioned two groups that demonstrated his willingness to preach to anyone who would listen. First were the **Greeks**, which aligns with **the wise**. The term refers to individuals with education and pedigree.



Paul also reached out to the ***barbarians***, who would be synonymous with those who are ***foolish***. While we tend to think of barbarians as uncivilized marauders, in Paul's day the term applied to anyone who was not educated or cultured. These were the commoners who often felt the disdain of the elite.

Paul cared about getting the gospel to as many people as possible. Every person is a sinner and in need of a Savior. Everyone suffers from the same spiritual problem. Paul understood he was obligated by his call and his commitment to the gospel. He never got over the remarkable love of God or the debt he owed Christ.

In Paul's mind, there was a difference between an ***obligation*** and a burden. He was obligated to share the gospel, but it was not burdensome to him to do so. In a sense, Paul was probably never more alive and fulfilled than when he was living out his call to share the gospel. He understood the good work being done by the believers in Rome. He also knew that more work could be done—work he could help accomplish. That's why he wanted to come to the Empire's capital. He wanted to spend time with his brothers and sisters in Christ. But even more, he was ***eager to preach the gospel*** in Rome.

***How would you describe Paul's passion for sharing the gospel? By comparison, how would you describe your passion for sharing the gospel?***

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#### **BIBLE SKILL: Use additional Scriptures to understand a passage.**

Read the following references to various uses of the term gospel: Matthew 4:23; 26:13; Mark 1:1; 10:29; Luke 4:18; Acts 20:24. How would you define the gospel according to each passage? Now read 1 Corinthians 15:3-8. How does Paul's statement clarify the elements of the gospel?

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## THE GOSPEL DECLARED (ROM. 1:16-17)

<sup>16</sup> 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. <sup>17</sup> For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, “The righteous shall live by faith.”

### VERSES 16-17

Paul’s ministry gave evidence that he was **not ashamed of the gospel**. He was confident in the gospel’s power to change lives. He knew how Jesus had changed his own life, transforming him from an enemy of the cross to one of the foremost Christian leaders of his day. His conversion demonstrated that the gospel is the power of God for salvation. It doesn’t just contain God’s power; it is God’s power. The gospel does more than just provide salvation from sin; it transforms every area of life.

This power is available to anyone willing to come to Christ. The Jews had the initial opportunity to respond. Abraham had received the promise as part of his blessing from God (Gen. 12:1-3). Jesus had ministered primarily to the Jews, and the early church had focused initially on Jerusalem and other Jewish population centers. Paul and others had taken the gospel to the Greeks, especially after many Jews had rejected the message.

Theologians typically recognize two main forms of divine revelation. The first is general revelation, which allows anyone to see God, particularly through the created world. The second is called special revelation. This involves God making Himself known in specific ways, primarily through the person of Jesus and the message of Scripture. The gospel falls under special revelation. Holding up human unrighteousness to the light of God’s **righteousness**, we see our own sinfulness and our need for a Savior. The phrase **from faith for faith** emphasizes that the process of being declared **righteous** by God is by faith from start to finish.

**How does the change that comes about through faith in Jesus produce boldness and confidence in sharing the gospel with others?**



# IN MY CONTEXT

- Truth is found in the gospel.
- Knowing the truth obligates believers to share with those yet to know.
- Truth produces conviction and boldness in those who believe.

***What misunderstandings about Jesus have you encountered? How can you use the description of the gospel given by Paul to correct those misunderstandings?***

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***Discuss ways your Bible study group can more effectively share the gospel. How can your group give greater support to the activities in your church designed to share the gospel?***

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***How has the gospel transformed your life? With whom can you share about this change?***

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## Prayer Needs

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