

Romans

Dr. Charles "Buddy" Parrish

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Romans 1:1



Vs. 1

- Paul was writing to a church which he did not know personally, a church which he had never visited. He was writing to a church which was in the greatest city in the greatest empire in the world. Because of all this and the recognition of his own rather dire situation in Corinth, he chose his words and thoughts with the greatest care.
- As in any letter written at the time, Paul begins by identifying himself. He his "Paul, a bond-servant...". The word we translate for bond-servant is the Greek word **doulos**. The general meaning of the word is "slave", yet it was also a title of honor in the Old Testament. Moses and Joshua were both "the doulos of God". Prophets like Amos and Jeremiah were "the doulos of God". So Paul appreciates the length and breath of the term. But more specifically, **doulos** can also mean "bond-servant", the kind of slave that is not born a slave, but one who was purchased for a price. This kind of slave lived independently in their previous life, made their own choices, and set their own path. But now they are bond-servants. They have been bought for a price. They now have no will of their own. They are not their own person, but every fiber of who they are now belongs to their master, the one who bought them for a price.
- Paul says he belongs to Christ Jesus. Paul's favorite title for Jesus, both here in Romans and throughout his letters, is kurios, meaning "Lord". Kurios describes someone who has undisputed possession of a person or a thing. It means master or owner in the most absolute sense. So as Paul begins, he wants to be clear that Jesus Christ owns him top to bottom, inside and out. There is no part of him that Jesus does not own. Thus as he is writing, he is writing not as one with authority, but with a directive from THE One with authority.
- Paul says he was called as "an apostle". Jesus said to the original apostles in the Upper Room in John 15:16, "You did not choose me, but I chose you". When Paul came to Christ, he had certainly not been looking to follow Him. Instead he had been

looking to destroy anyone who believed in Christ, making Paul the very LAST person anyone would expect Christ would call. Yet by claiming the title of “apostle” he offers balance to the title “bond-servant”, for whereas a bond-servant has no intrinsic authority whatsoever, an apostle comes with a great deal of authority. Paul wants to be understood as a “servant apostle” who belongs fully to Jesus Christ, but comes with the full authority of Christ. Think of it this way: at Christmas we sing “We Three Kings” to commemorate the visit of the magi to the Christ child; yet they were not kings, but magi, wise men, who came bearing very expensive gifts for the One who was born King of the Jews; so they came on the full authority of their kings and with the gifts their kings sent to the new prince. So too then, Paul comes as a servant of the King, bearing the gift of the King, and with the full authority of the King.

- Paul says he was set apart for “the gospel (the good news) of God”. In Galatians 1:15, Paul says that, “...when God, who had set me apart from even my mother’s womb, called me through His grace...”, he is telling us that God had always had a plan for his life and then at Antioch, God narrowed the focus of that plan. In Acts 13:2, the Holy Spirit says to the Antioch church, “Set apart for Me, Barnabas and Saul (Paul) for the work to which I have called them”, that is to take the gospel, the good news of God, to the Gentiles.
- What Paul is saying of his own life is true of any Christian’s life. Psalms 139:13 speaks of how we are known by God because he wove us together in our mother’s womb. If we then accept God’s call on our life, His ownership of our life, and surrender our life to Him as Paul did, then nothing in our life is wasted or inadequate. All Moses had was his shepherd’s staff. All the boy David had was a slingshot. Paul had a Roman father and a Jewish mother, giving him both a Roman citizenship and a Jewish heritage. He had an exemplary education. His early life was in cosmopolitan Tarsus and his young adult life in Jerusalem. Even the evil he did persecuting the church was not wasted, as his actions led him to Damascus and left a scar that would connect him to even a Roman jailer.
- There is no one God cannot use for the Truth of His gospel, His good news.