

Romans 1:1-7 Messenger, Message, Mission, & More 004-007
by Ray Mondragon

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Romans is a long book and Paul has a long formal introduction—siete verses. Five parts. First: the Messenger.

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| 1. The Messenger - Paul | 1:1 |
| a. The Servant of Christ | |

He tells us who he is, as in other letters; in this case, not only apostle but two other things as well...

There is a lot of information about Paul the Apostle in the first century; much is recorded in the book of Acts, and he wrote 12 other books in the NT. In Scripture a name was more significant than today. In the OT and the NT it represented the whole person; it captured, even sometimes by revelation, something of the character of the individuals. Paul's name was changed from Saul to denote the change in his mission. Like Abram was changed to Abraham and Jacob to Israel indicating that a radical transformation took place in the lives of those individuals. Usually it is a conversion experience, as in Saul to Paul.

1:1 Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God,
2 which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures,
3 concerning His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh,
4 who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord,
5 through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for His name's sake,
6 among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ;
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.

There are seven verses because of grammar—it being a long single complete sentence. Typical of Paul. You have to look at the whole sentence because it is one thought.

The next thing is to find the main verb or subject of the sentence. The subject is 'Paul' and there is no verb. There are subordinate clauses that have verbs but the independent clause does not. This is not unusual; most of Paul's introductions are lacking the verb. In Greek if a verb is obvious, like 'is', it is not written. In this case it is very long without a main verb. It might have come in verse seven.

The first verb is in verse two which is in the subordinate clause 'which He...promised...' referring to the gospel. Then, verses three and four, 'concerning His Son', describing the Son, which describe the *message*. Next, in five and six, is the *mission*, which is to bring the message to the Gentiles, including the Romans, the recipients of the letter. It is through Jesus Christ (verse four) that they have grace and the apostleship (verse five). And the mission is to bring about the faith among the Gentiles. The gospel is the whole subject of Romans. It involves God's glory. It is effected through the apostleship of Paul.

All of that is an expansion of the messenger, the message and the mission. Then, verse seven: the *membership*, all the beloved in Rome, so the understood verb is something like '*Send*' as the first word of verse seven. ...Sends to all who are beloved of God in Rome, his audience. So it is: Paul...sends, but there is a lot in between—a *message* and a *mission*, continuing the alliteration with 'm', to the '*membership*' in Rome, called saints. He is sending them grace and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the *munificence*, the blessing or gift from him.

Verse six: Every believer has a calling. The difference between the first century church and the twenty-first century church is that the believers in the first century more often than not had a sense of a calling whereas in the twenty-first century church they have lost sight of the

fact that once you are a believer you have a calling; in other words, God wants to use you in a very special and unique way. Everyone that knows Jesus Christ personally is in the ministry; everyone has a calling and it is different, unique, for every believer. And some, like Paul have a particular and special calling; and part of that in Paul's case, is special — apostleship. It could be called an aspect of election since in Ephesians 1.4 it says, *just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world...* The word 'call' is an important one and we will note it again in more detail.

So Paul is called as an apostle, as a writer of the New Testament, as a missionary—all of that—and even as a bondservant though the word 'calling' is not there. You have a particular calling as well and you need to find out what your calling is, what is unique in you that God has given in terms of accomplishing everything that He has for you. There is a generic sense, called to obedience and everything that is applicable to one's life, and then there is a specific calling which is unique to each individual and to all the Roman believers, verse six.

So that is the sentence and in this case it is Paul, the subject who describes himself, the message, the mission and then what he is sending: grace and peace in the Lord Jesus Christ to a particular group.

1.1 Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God,

Paul, a name given to him in the first century for a radical change—and he would be a prime example: a killer of Christians to one of the prime apostles that God used as mightily as any of them.

1:1 Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God,

A bond-servant, probably in a possessive sense, that Jesus is the owner of his life. First Century slavery was not necessarily a bad thing. In fact it was analogous to an employee in our culture where bosses are not inherently evil, so slave owners were not inherently evil. And slaves were not inherently oppressed. In our culture a boss can be very demanding and oppressive and his employees can feel very oppressed and abused. Slavery is not condemned in Scripture. Let's look at what it was like in the first century.

The Greek word is very familiar; it occurs over a hundred times in the New Testament and the equivalent in the Old Testament. They were people serving another individual and in the first century all slaves were supported by a master—that was how they survived. So it was in the best interest of the master to care for his slaves. The better he fed them, and the better he protected them, the better they could perform, just like

in our culture, you pay people according to their value. It was the way of doing things that was a part of the economy.

But there are different levels of slaves—at least five different kinds of slaves in the first century. One is a word related to 'house', an everyday slave, women who took care of the daily chores in a large, extended household. And in most large families would be almost a community that together would harvest the crops, take care of the animals, do all of the things related; each one would have different duties and work that they would accomplish. Together they would maintain a family, so a household slave would be primarily responsible for domestic things. As a result most members of the early church would be slaves. Like today some of you are employers like slave owners.

δοῦλος (doulos) = slave

- > Lowest of Slaves
- > Owned by Another
- > No Standing
- > Absolute Obedience
- > Subservient to Master

The last one is 'doulos', the lowest of all of them, the most menial. This is the position that Jesus took when He washed the feet of the disciples. And they were the ones that washed the toilets in the first century--even worse than that was washing people's feet. Think about it: they wore sandals, and the unpaved streets were not only dusty but with dirty animals and the things that come with them! You walked on all those things. When you entered a home, the lowest one in the household was the one to greet you and wash your feet to keep the house clean and free from odors. Imagine yourself walking in that time; it was a necessity.

There was no one in the upper room that stooped to the level of a *doulos* and Jesus took it upon himself to do it. He would have washed the feet of the disciples. He was a *doulos*; in fact He was described in this way; Jesus Christ, the lowest of slaves. There were different levels or responsibilities, somewhat like a scale of importance. A trusted slave might have been one that did mostly finances, a duty like office work, a 'white collar' slave. But *doulos* is the other end, the bottom end of the spectrum.

He was owned by another, the case of all slaves in that household, but particularly the *doulos*. He was not his own; he could not come and go as he pleased. His will is basically taken up by the master. And, as we said, a wise master takes care of even the lowest of slaves; it is to his benefit, his advantage. For an abusive one it would obviously be counterproductive.

A slave had no standing, particularly a *doulos*. Other slaves would have standing. Remember in the Old Testament: Abraham said, ‘I don’t have a son’ and assigned the standing of a first-born to a servant. This is in Genesis. A *doulos* has no standing. So this slave does not own anything, no property except very personal items like a toothbrush.

Absolute obedience was required because he was owned by another. This is what Paul was describing: this is who I am, this was his attitude as an apostle. He was going from both ends of the spectrum; he started with the lowly end, a *doulos*, a bond-servant. He could be executed for disobedience if the slave owner so decided.

So, obviously, all of this is subservience to the master. But in that culture there was no opportunity so it was an advantage to be under a wealthy slave owner. Actually the Mosaic Law made many provisions for both masters and slaves and it was to protect people from oppressive slave owners.

Bond-servants

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| √ Abraham | √ Peter |
| √ Moses | √ John |
| √ Joshua | √ James |
| √ David | √ Jude |
| √ Prophets | √ Timothy |
| √ Messiah | √ Paul |

Many Old Testament leaders were called, and identified as themselves as bond-servants of God Himself: ‘I want to serve the God, the ultimate master, the ultimate slave owner’, and in the New Testament, ‘the one that died for me and purchased me as a result of His death’. In the Old Testament Abraham, Moses, Joshua—they are all called bond-servants. Also David, King David, became the master-owner of Israel, but also became the bond-servant to the ultimate master, putting himself under God the Father. The prophets, all of them are described as bond-servants. And the Messiah Himself, Jesus Christ, was described as a bond-servant, ‘the Servant of the Lord’. It is very common: it has this idea of the Messiah being a servant under the Lord.

In the New Testament, Peter describes himself that way. John, in his writings, in the introduction of his book, Jude in his introduction calls himself a bond-servant. And so also Timothy and Paul.

We can draw an application: It is a common description of those who have trusted in Jesus Christ; He has bought us from slavery to sin by paying the price of the crucifixion. Jesus bought us; we belong to Him when we trust in Him. And now we should have the attitude of a bond-servant, or bond-slave.

Applications

1. Attitude of availability

So the attitude is one of availability: I belong to you in the management of Your household, Lord, and You carry out Your plan in Your household; I fit into Your household and want to carry out Your plan, being subservient to You to do the things that You desire of me to promote the well-being of this spiritual, heavenly, eternal household. That should be our attitude. Willingness, availability, obedience and the desire to serve Him. It is part of our calling.

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| b. The Called Apostle | |

1.1 Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God,

From the lowest to the highest end of the spectrum: he is an apostle and from God’s perspective this is a high office. It was an office in the first century because of a unique situation; after the first century, even during it, leadership in the church moved to elders. But God founded the church on apostles and prophets. Paul was called as an apostle, probably from the foundation of the world. This was part of who he was and what God had designed for him. He took an individual that was a killer of Christians, miraculously convert him, transform him over a very short period of time and almost immediately he would tell him what his life mission would be. What is an apostle?

Apostle

√ The Twelve - A unique group of individuals and you see that in some passages, particularly in Matthew 19.28. These are the twelve that Jesus called in His earthly ministry; they are named on several occasions in the New Testament. But here is a very interesting passage which, incidentally, gives us a clue why Judas had to be replaced. Some believe that Paul is a replacement of Judas, but that goes against Acts chapter one. Judas had to be replaced because the twelve are a particular called group.

Matthew 19.28 *And Jesus said to them, “Truly I say to you, that you who have followed Me, in the regeneration [that is the Millennial Kingdom] when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious*