

ROMANS

THE POWER OF THE GOSPEL

ROMANS 1:1-7

WHAT IS THE GOSPEL? (ROM. 1:1-7)

July 7, 2024

Rev. Dr. Matt Ayars

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Most often we think of the gospel as a thing. This is correct in many ways. The gospel is a proclamation of good news, it is a story, and ultimately it is the synonymous with the reality of God's rescue of the creation (and namely humanity). Romans 1:1-7 reminds us that the gospel is also a person. While salvation is connected to the change in status from guilty (estranged) to innocent (reconciled), salvation is also a love relationship. Salvation is punctiliar, but it is also a journey of learning to trust Jesus.

2.0 ROMANS 1:1-7 THE SALUTATION

2.1 ELIGIBILITY FOR MINISTRY

The salutation in Paul's letter to the Romans is longer than his other letters. This is for two reasons. The first is the he was not involved in planting this church, so they do not know him the way some of the other letter-recipients know him. He has to spend more time getting acquainted with his audience.

The second reason for Paul's more robust salutation is to validate his authority as an apostle. We learn from scripture that many questioned Paul's authorization to serve as an apostle. After all, he comes with a background as a persecutor of Christians. Paul's life transformation, his knowledge of the gospel, and ultimately his living relationship with Jesus is proof that he is authorized.

2.2 THE GOSPEL IS A PERSON

Paul introduces the letter by stating that he is an apostle who has been set apart for the gospel of God. He then goes onto define "gospel". His definition of the gospel is the person of Jesus Christ.

It is common among Christians in America today to think of the gospel as a thing; which it certainly is. The gospel is a story, it is a truth, and, ultimately, it is the proclamation of good news. But what is that good news? Is it simply escaped from final judgment resulting in eternal punishment. No. The gospel is ultimately atonement. As we read on in the letter to the Romans, we learn that at the heart of the gospel is a reconciled relationship with God through Jesus Christ. The gospel is a love relationship that is dynamic and responsive.

2.3 THE OBEDIENCE OF FAITH

Paul says that the outcome of the restored relationship that is the gospel is the "obedience of faith" (Rom. 1:5). But what does that mean? Paul is saying that faith and obedience are inseparable. True faith is one that obeys. The apostles' creed begins with "I believe in God..." By "believe", we're not talking about the simple affirmation of facts or mental ascent. We have to understand Christian "faith" as "trust". Being a Christian is not just about believing in things, it's about trusting God to the point of obeying his every command. This happens in the context of personal relationship.

3.0 CONCLUSION

1. **Eligibility for Ministry.** All who are in Christ are eligible to serve in ministry. Nothing in our previous lives disqualifies us from serving Jesus, as long as we are in him now.
2. **Christianity is a Personal Relationship.** We must nurture our relationship with Jesus. Being a Christian is not about just getting our sins forgiven, going to church, and living with a comfortable morality. It's about an ongoing, dynamic relationship with Jesus.
3. **Trusting Obedience.** When we walk with Jesus, we learn to trust him and therefore obey him. To have "faith" means to trust God—and that trust is proven through our obedience.