

PAUL'S APOSTOLIC MINISTRY OF THE GOSPEL ROMANS 1:5–6

INTRODUCTION

We are **continuing our study of Paul's introduction** to his letter, and with this being our third sermon on the subject, I'm sure we would all agree that Paul's introduction to Romans **is a substantial one.**

It is substantial not only **in terms of length**, though as we've learnt its the longest introduction of any of his letters, but also **in terms of substance.**

Paul's introduction, like the body of his letter to the Romans, is **doctrinally dense with succinct statements** of profound **theological insight and significance.**

Paul had an important purpose for such a substantial introduction, though, as we now know that he aimed to **establish his credentials** as an apostle and **summarise his gospel message.**¹

Since Paul had never met most of the Christians in Rome, he needed to introduce both his message and his ministry to them **so that they would accept his message and support his ministry.**

¹ John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Romans: God's Good News for the World*, The Bible Speaks Today (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 46.

Thus far in our series, we've considered Paul's life as it was transformed by the power of God in the gospel, and we've considered the Christ-centred gospel message that he proclaimed.

Today we'll examine **his introduction to his apostolic ministry of the gospel**.

In short then, we've already studied Paul's introduction to his **life and his message**, and today we'll study his introduction to **his ministry**.

As we learnt from our overview of Romans, and have seen demonstrated through our study of the letter's introduction, **the theme of Romans is the gospel**.

We also know that both the letter and the gospel it expounds **are about God**.

As **Leon Morris** aptly comments—

*“God is the most important word in this epistle. Romans is a book about God. No topic is treated with anything like the frequency of God. Everything Paul touches in this letter he relates to God.”*²

That is reflected in Paul's opening reference to the gospel as **“the gospel of God”** in **verse 1**.

² Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press, 1988), 40.

Last Sunday we established that Paul uses this phrase, “**the gospel of God**,” to refer to, “*all aspects... in which the Gospel is in any way related to God.*”³

Having studied Paul’s introduction to the **Christ-centred gospel message** he proclaimed, we can now **understand two things** about “**the gospel of God**” specifically:

1. **The central focus** of the gospel is Christ.
To say that another way, the **heart of the gospel** is the person and work of Jesus Christ.
Christ is the **substance** of the message that Paul proclaimed.
2. **The source or origin** of the gospel is God the Father.
The apostles did not invent it.
It was revealed and entrusted to them by God.

As **John Stott** put it, the gospel is “*God’s own good news for a lost world.*”⁴

This point, that God is the **ultimate source** of the gospel message, is one that Paul stressed to the Galatian churches when we wrote in **Galatians 1:11-12**—

11 I make known to you, brothers, that the gospel which I am proclaiming as good news is not according to man.

12 For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.

³ Douglas J. Moo, *The Letter to the Romans*, ed. Ned B. Stonehouse et al., Second Edition, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2018), 41 (fn22).

⁴ John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Romans: God’s Good News for the World*, The Bible Speaks Today (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 48.

Paul stressed that God was the source of the gospel **in order to defend it** against the **Jewish false teachers** who wanted to add works of the Law, like circumcision, to the good news of **Jesus' person and work**.

As an apostle, Paul's ministry was to faithfully proclaim the gospel and fearlessly defend it from every error because, as **Stott** said, the gospel is "*God's own good news for a lost world.*"

To sum up what we've learnt thus far from Paul's introduction — **his message is from God, and its focus is Christ.**

In our study today, we'll learn similarly that **Paul's ministry is from God, and its focus is Christ.**

So just as Paul stated himself in **verse 1**, both his **message and ministry** are from **God**.

And as he further explains in **verses 2–7**, both his **message and ministry** centre on **Christ**.

In other words, as we examine **verse 5–7** today, we'll find that just as the focus of the gospel is Jesus Christ, so too is the **focus of Paul's apostolic ministry also Jesus Christ.**

Specifically, we'll see that Paul understands the focus of his ministry to be on the **Lordship of Christ over all the nations.**

This work of Christ to **redeem and rule over His chosen people** from **every tribe, tongue, people, and nation**—including Israel—is the **purpose of His exaltation** as the powerful Son of God that we learnt about in the previous sermon.

As you know, the **OT backdrop** to what Paul wrote in **Romans 1:4** is **Psalms 2:7** which records the Father’s exaltation of Jesus Christ—

“I will surely tell of the decree of Yahweh: He said to Me, ‘You are My Son, Today I have begotten You.’”

David connects the exaltation of the person of the Messiah and powerful Son of God **with His power to save** by bringing the nations into subjection to His Lordship, as we read in **Psalms 2:8**—

“Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance, And the ends of the earth as Your possession.”

Therefore, David ends the Psalm with a **call to repent and receive the Son as Saviour and Lord**, warning of His wrath while **also promising His gracious salvation** to those who submit to Him, as we see in **Psalms 2:12**—

Kiss the Son, lest He become angry, and you perish in the way, For His wrath may soon be kindled. How blessed are all who take refuge in Him!

As Paul introduces his gospel message and apostolic ministry, he not only points to their focus on Christ, but also to **their closely connected scope of all the nations**.

The broadening of the scope of the gospel and God's work of saving sinners **to include not just the nation of Israel**, but all the gentile nations too, was **part of the mystery** that was later revealed in the gospel.

A "**mystery**," as Paul uses the term, refers to something **either partially or completely hidden** at one time that has now been fully revealed.

We see this particularly in **Ephesians 3:4-7**—

⁴ **...When you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ,**

⁵ **which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it was now revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit:**

⁶ **that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel,**

⁷ **of which I was made a minister, according to the gift of God's grace which was given to me according to the working of His power.**

As we'll come to see, **the inclusion of the gentiles in the gospel** and God's saving work in Christ **is a major subject** that Paul addresses in the letter of Romans.

For now, it's sufficient for us to know that the scope of the gospel became the scope of Paul's ministry so that, as he says in **Romans 11:13**, his ministry was that of "**an apostle of Gentiles.**"

As Paul indicates against the backdrop of **Psalm 2**, the exaltation of the Messiah to be the Son-of-God-in-power and sovereign, saving Lord **necessitates the broadening of the scope of His work** beyond the nation of Israel to include all the gentiles.

Therefore, **the scope of the good news** that centres on the person and work of Christ **must also include all the gentile nations**.

And just as the scope of the gospel includes **every tribe, tongue, people, and nation**, so too does the scope of Paul's apostolic ministry.

To put it simply, the **gospel** is *from* God, *about* Christ, and *for* the nations.

So too is the **ministry of Paul** *from* God, *about* Christ, and *for* the nations.

With that in mind, we can now understand the **significance** of Paul's "weighty" introduction for us as contemporary readers.

As Paul introduced his gospel message in **verses 2–4**, we came to understand that the Christ-centred focus of the gospel demands that He be the **centre of our faith and worship**.

Today, as we examine Paul's introduction of his apostolic ministry in **verses 5–7**, we'll learn that despite Paul's uniqueness as an apostle, his ministry of the gospel becomes the **model for our own gospel ministry today**.

And once again, we'll learn that **Christ must be the centre**—of our faith, of our worship, and of our ministry.

PROPOSITION

As we study **Romans 1:5–7**, we'll examine Paul's introduction of his apostolic ministry.

In his introduction, Paul offers **four elements** of his apostolic ministry of the gospel:

1. Paul's **commission to** ministry
2. Paul's **goal in** ministry
3. Paul's **scope of** ministry
4. Paul's **purpose in** ministry

1. PAUL'S COMMISSION TO MINISTRY

In the **preceding verses**, Paul introduced his gospel message and its central focus on Christ.

Jesus Christ is the heart of the gospel—the substance of the good news.

Paul's particular emphasis, though, was on the exaltation of the Son to be the sovereign Lord.

As we come to study **verse 5**, Paul continues his thought from that point in **verse 4** where he proclaims that the Son has been exalted by His resurrection to be, "**Jesus Christ our Lord.**"

Verse 5 then relates Christ's exaltation to Paul's apostolic ministry, thus indicating that Paul understands the focus of his ministry to be on the Lordship of Christ over all the nations.

As **one author** wrote—

“It is precisely in His role as the Messiah and Lord, sovereign not only over Jews but over all the earth, that Jesus gave Paul the mission of proclaiming the gospel to the gentiles.”⁵

The Christ-centred focus of Paul’s ministry is seen in the **first element** he offers—His commission to ministry.

Look at **verse 5** as Paul writes—

through whom [Jesus Christ our Lord] we received grace and apostleship

Here Paul uses the prepositional phrase, “**through whom,**” to refer to the risen and glorified Jesus Christ, the Lord, as the mediator of his apostolic ministry.

In other words, Paul was commissioned to be an apostle by the Lord Jesus Himself.

This commission is recorded in detail and referred to a number of times throughout the NT, doubtless because of the significance.

In Luke’s account of Paul’s conversion in **Acts 9:15**, we read Christ’s instructions to Ananias—

“Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel.”

The most detailed account is offered by Paul himself in **Acts 26:16-18** when he recounts what Jesus said to him—

⁵ Frank Thielman, *Romans*, ed. Clinton E. Arnold, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2018), 63.

16 “For this purpose I have appeared to you, to appoint you a servant and a witness not only to the things which you have seen, but also to the things in which I will appear to you;

17 rescuing you from the Jewish people and from the Gentiles, to whom I am sending you,

18 to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the authority of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.”

Paul was called by God the Father, as he indicated in **Romans 1:1**, and commissioned by the Lord Jesus, to be an authorised representative of Christ, proclaiming and defending the gospel message through his preaching, teaching, and inspired writing ministry.

The significance of this commission lies in that Paul was specifically designated to minister to the gentiles, a ministry which also included authoring the majority of the NT letters.

As **Galatians 2:7-8** indicates, Paul—

7 ...had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been to the circumcised

8 (for [God] who worked in Peter unto his apostleship to the circumcised worked in [Paul] also unto the Gentiles)

This commission changed the history of the church, and even the history of all humanity, as God called Paul into His service to be the greatest of all apostles.

As we have already established in this series, though, whatever greatness God bestowed upon Paul was not to exalt himself, but to exalt God.

Indeed, the greatness of the ministry that Paul was commissioned to compels us to focus on the greatness of God and His work of saving His people.

As Paul stresses here, his call to apostleship came from God but was mediated through Christ.

In other words, Jesus Christ was the One to formally commission Paul to His service.

As Paul himself understood, this commission meant that Paul would not work according to his own plan and purpose, but according to Christ's plan and purpose—a purpose which centred on glorifying Christ in His Lordship over all the nations.

Now as you see in **verse 5**, Paul actually uses the plural, **“we received.”**

While some have suggested that he is referring to the grace receive by either all believers, or perhaps all apostles, the context clearly indicates that Paul is using the plural to refer to himself alone.

This is what we call a writer's, or an editorial, plural.

The writer's plural is particularly fitting when making a formal statement of authority, as Paul is here.⁶

⁶ C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, International Critical Commentary (London; New York: T&T Clark International, 2004), 65.

In fact, the use of the writer's plural remains common today, especially in formal writing such as academic literature.

Since the context focusses on Paul's introduction of his unique apostolic ministry, we should then clearly understand Paul to be the one who received "**grace and apostleship**" here.

Indeed, that phrase is key to clearly understanding what Paul intends to communicate here.

Paul is using an important grammatical feature of the Greek language called a **hendiadys**.

A **hendiadys** uses two terms to refer to one concept, as Paul is doing here.

Paul isn't talking about receiving from Christ both grace, perhaps in conversion, and apostleship, indicating his commission.

Rather, he's referring to receiving a "**gracious apostleship**."⁷

From our introduction to the life of Paul, we already know that Paul did not separate his conversion and commission in his mind, all the more so since he received both in the same Damascus road experience.

So here Paul's emphasis is on the undeserved favour he received in being commissioned as an apostle.

⁷ Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, ed. Robert W. Yarbrough and Joshua W. Jipp, Second Edition, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic: A Division of Baker Publishing Group, 2018), 38.

His apostleship was a gracious gift that he had done nothing to deserve—in fact, as a persecutor of the church, he had done the very opposite.

Paul was, then, always conscious that his commission was an underserved gift from the Lord Jesus.

As one author pointed out, Paul used the word “**grace**” to refer to “*God’s undeserved love revealed in Christ*” and so we may even speak of Paul using the term “*to sum up the whole gospel in a single word.*”⁸

Paul then received his commission to apostolic ministry not only **for** the gospel, but **because** of the gospel and the grace of God in Christ, as he wrote in **Romans 15:15-16** of—

¹⁵ **...the grace that was given me by God**

¹⁶ **for me to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, ministering as a priest the gospel of God, so that my offering of the Gentiles may become acceptable...**

For Paul, if the commission was received by grace, then the ability to faithfully complete the commission would also be received by the gracious enabling of God.

As Paul himself contended in **1 Corinthians 15:10**, he was commissioned to a greater responsibility that required greater labours than the other apostles, but since the task was given by grace, so too was his ability a gift of grace—

By the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I laboured even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me.

⁸ Cranfield, *Romans*, ICC, 71.

Of course, since Paul's commission to apostolic ministry was a special gift of grace from God and through Christ, he then also believed that his ministry did not glorify him, but the One who both give him the ministry and enabled him in it, as

Romans 11:36 says—

From Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.

The One who gives the grace gets the glory, and as we'll see later in **verse 5**, Paul laboured with that very purpose of glorifying Christ.

Paul's commission is an important element of his introduction of his ministry, but he offers another element in the form of his goal in ministry.

2. PAUL'S GOAL IN MINISTRY

When we speak of goals and purposes, we often use the terms interchangeably.

However, as I use them today, I'm using the term "goal" to refer to a specific, measurable outcome or result.

A purpose, as I'll use it later, is then a broader motivation or reason for doing something.

After offering insight into his commission, Paul then offers insight into his goal in ministry.

The specific, measurable outcome that he laboured for was what he termed in **verse 5** as, "**the obedience of faith.**"

While this was not the ultimate purpose for Paul's ministry, this was the reason for which Christ had tasked him to be a preacher of the gospel.

The phrase, "**the obedience of faith,**" is key to the epistle.

It appears nowhere else in the NT—only here in Romans, first in **verse 5** and then again at the end of the letter in **Romans 16:25-26**—

²⁵ **Now to Him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past,**

{continued}

²⁶ **but now is manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all the Gentiles, leading to obedience of faith...**

Paul uses the phrase twice in the epistle, creating a clear “bookend” structure that highlights its importance.

The trouble is, as important as what this phrase is to the letter of Romans, we’re not absolutely certain what Paul means by it.

The reason for the uncertainty is the flexibility of the Greek grammar used by Paul here—what a call a genitive construct.

If you’re not a grammar nerd like me, you’re welcome to forget the technical terms, but the concept is easy to understand nonetheless.

By using a genitive construct, Paul could mean any of a number of options, such as:

- ‘obedience to the faith’—that is, to faith in the sense of the body of doctrine;
- ‘the obedience required/ produced by faith’;
- ‘faithful obedience’; or
- ‘the obedience which consists in faith’.⁹

Commentators are widely divided on which nuance Paul intended, though there’s actually no reason for us to be troubled by the matter.

⁹ Cranfield, *Romans*, ICC, 66.

Paul could certainly have chosen a more precise manner of communicating his meaning, but perhaps he deliberately chose a measure of ambiguity in order to encompass the full response required by the gospel.

In fact, the grammar even allows for exactly that with what is called a “plenary genitive.”

If that was Paul’s intention, then the phrase would have a broad and all-encompassing meaning and could be understood as—

*“obedience to the call of faith (the gospel) that results in a lifestyle of faithful obedience.”*¹⁰

One commentator points out why the broad meaning is appropriate—

*“Paul’s preaching is aimed at obtaining from his hearers true obedience to God, the essence of which is a responding to His message of good news with faith. It is also true to say that to make the decision of faith is an act of obedience toward God and also that true faith by its very nature includes in itself the sincere desire and will to obey God in all things.”*¹¹

The closest that we come to Paul clarifying what he means by the phrase is what we read in **Romans 15:18**—

I will not be bold to speak of anything except what Christ has brought about through me, leading to the obedience of the Gentiles by word and deed

¹⁰ John D Harvey, *Romans*, ed. Andreas J Köstenberger and Robert W. Yarbrough, Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament (B&H, 2017), 11. cf. Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 119–21.

¹¹ Cranfield, *Romans*, ICC, 66–67.

The reference to “**word and deed**” seems to suggest that Paul places more emphasis on the obedience that comes from faith—that is, ongoing obedience that is the fruit of ongoing faith.¹²

However, since Paul apparently preferred the ambiguity, it may indeed be best to grant him that and understand the phrase to encompass all that God requires of those who respond to the gospel.

As **Doug Moo** writes—

*“The best alternative, then, is to use the straightforward, though ambiguous, translation ‘obedience of faith,’ and to interpret the words in the phrase as mutually interpreting: faith, if genuine, always has obedience as its outcome; obedience, if it is to please God, must always be accompanied by faith.”*¹³

As **another author** famously put it—

*“Faith is not obedience, but as obedience is not obedience without faith, faith is not faith without obedience. They belong together, as do thunder and lightning in a thunderstorm.”*¹⁴

For Paul, the message of the gospel is to call people to the obedience of faith.¹⁵

¹² Andrew David Naselli, *Romans: A Concise Guide to the Greatest Letter Ever Written* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2022), 34.

¹³ Douglas J. Moo, *Romans*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2000), 38.

¹⁴ Karl Barth, cited in Moo, *Romans*, 51.

¹⁵ John F. MacArthur Jr., *Romans*, vol. 1, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1991), 24.

Therefore, Paul’s goal in ministry was to proclaim the gospel in order to bring about the obedience of the nations to Christ, as a matter of recognising and submitting to His exalted Lordship.

The specific, measurable outcome of his preaching that he aimed for was a total, unreserved commitment to Jesus Christ, which he called “**the obedience of faith.**”¹⁶

As **John MacArthur** wrote—

*“To call men to the obedience of faith is to fulfil the Great Commission, to bring men to Jesus Christ and to the observance of everything He commands in His Word.”*¹⁷

So then, we must understand Paul’s apostolic task in the broadest sense possible—

not only to preach the gospel in order to evangelise the nations and call for a response of faith,

but also to establish and build up churches in order that believers may grow in faithful obedience through the discipleship of local churches.¹⁸

In short, the specific measurable outcome that Paul aimed at among those he ministered to was “obedience to the call of faith in the gospel that results in a lifestyle of faithful obedience.”

Paul’s goal was the total, unreserved commitment of Jew and gentile to Jesus Christ as the exalted Lord of all the nations— the focus of his goal in ministry.

¹⁶ Stott, *The Message of Romans*, 52–53.

¹⁷ MacArthur, *Romans*, 24.

¹⁸ Moo, *Romans*, 51.

3. PAUL'S SCOPE OF MINISTRY

Thus far, Paul has offered two elements of his ministry—the commission and the goal of his apostolic task.

As he continues in **verse 5**, Paul offers further insight into apostolic ministry of the gospel with a third element—the scope of his ministry.

That is what Paul communicates with the words, “**among all the Gentiles.**”

To begin with, we should know that Paul uses an important Greek word **ἔθνος** which is translated here as “**Gentiles.**”

The word indicates ethnicity, as opposed to nationality.¹⁹

It has less to do with where you live, and more to do with your ethnic heritage.

For example, though Paul was born in Tarsus and lived as a Roman citizen in a Roman city, his identity was bound up in his Jewish ethnicity and heritage.

Therefore, Paul is stating that the scope of his ministry was the non-Jewish people groups who had previously come second to God's focus on the people of Israel in the OT.

¹⁹ Stanley E. Porter and David I. Yoon, *Romans: A Handbook on the Greek Text*, ed. Lidija Novakovic, Baylor Handbook on the Greek New Testament (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2023), 6.

As we read earlier in **Ephesians 3:6**, the gospel announced the glorious expansion of God's work of salvation to include people from every ethnic group, as Paul wrote, the gospel revealed—

⁶ that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel

Therefore, the risen and glorified Christ now calls for the repentance and faith of both Jew and gentile in order to gather in His chosen people from every ethnicity, as the heavenly song of **Revelation 5:9** declares—

“Worthy are You to take the scroll and to open its seals, because You were slain and purchased for God with Your blood people from every tribe and tongue and people and nation.”

Once more, the good news of God's salvation for all peoples is directly linked to His exaltation of His Son as the exalted and sovereign Lord.

As we have already established, that was the expectation of the Messianic prophecy of **Psalm 2**.

It's further explained by the prophet Isaiah, who records Yahweh's words to His servant Messiah in **Isaiah 49:6**—

“It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to cause the preserved ones of Israel to return; I will also give You as a light of the nations so that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth.”

Ultimately, the gospel of God's salvation in Christ has a universal scope for all peoples because Christ is too great, too exalted a Saviour and Lord to be confined only to the nation of Israel.

Christ's exaltation as Lord of the nations demands the submission and worship of the nations as He saves unto Himself a chosen people from every tribe, tongue, people, and nation.

Paul announces that just as the gospel has a universal scope, so too does his apostolic ministry as he proclaims the gospel to all the gentile peoples.

As **one commentator** aptly states—

*“Paul received as a gracious gift from God the assignment to go to the world's non-Jewish peoples and urge them to respond obediently to the message of the universal lordship of Jesus.”*²⁰

Therefore, the scope of Paul's ministry corresponds to the scope of the ministry that the Lord Jesus commissioned every one of His followers to, as we read in **Matthew 28:18-20**—

¹⁸ Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.

¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,

²⁰ teaching them to keep all that I commanded you; and behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

²⁰ Thielman, *Romans*, 63.

Paul's relentless efforts to preach the gospel throughout the Roman Empire are a reflection of this scope, as we read in **Romans 15:20-21**—

²⁰ **In this way I make it my ambition to proclaim the gospel, not where Christ was already named, so that I would not build on another man's foundation;**

²¹ **but as it is written, [Isaiah 52:15—]“They who had no declaration of Him shall see, And they who have not heard shall understand.”**

Paul's scope of ministry not only reflects Christ's Great Commission to go to all the nations, but also his specific commission from the Lord to go to the world's non-Jewish peoples with the gospel.

We've noted his special priority for the gentiles already, but in **Galatians 2:9** Paul refers to the understanding that Peter and the other apostles would primarily minister to the Jews, while Paul would primarily minister to the other peoples—

Recognising the grace that had been given to me, James and Cephas [Peter] and John... gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, so that we might go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised.

We can actually see, then, that Paul's letter to the Romans falls within the scope of his gospel ministry.

Since the church was primarily—though not exclusively—made up on gentile Christians, they fell within the scope of his ministry and apostolic authority.

That is why Paul adds a parenthetical note in **verse 6** to clarify that when he refers to ministering to the gentiles, that includes the believers in Rome, as he writes—

among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ

Paul reminds the recipients of his readers then that there is something more important than their ethnic origin—they belong to Jesus Christ.

As we've already learnt from the first time Paul used the term "**called**" in **verse 1**, it expresses God's effectual call to salvation and ministry.

As **Doug Moo** wrote—

*"What is meant is not an 'invitation' but the powerful and irresistible reaching out of God in grace to bring people into his kingdom."*²¹

While the scope of Paul's ministry did not exclude Jews—a point that is evident in both his writings and the record of his ministry in Acts—he did have a special priority for the gentiles.

Just as his commission and goal had a focus on Christ, so too did his scope since the focus of his gospel proclamation to the nations was Christ's universal Lordship and His worthiness to be worshipped by more than just Israel.

As the exalted Lord, Christ is worthy to be worshipped by every tribe, tongue, people, and nation.

²¹ Moo, *Romans*, 53.

4. PAUL'S PURPOSE IN MINISTRY

As Paul offers the fourth and final element of his ministry, we return from briefly looking at his parenthesis in **verse 6** to his final phrase in **verse 5**—**for the sake of His name**.

Typically, when Scripture refers to “the name,” of a person, it does so with a more significance than we think of today.

In both the OT and NT, the name sums up the whole person.²²

A person's name refers to his character and significance, as Paul uses the term to refer to Christ's significance here as the purpose of his ministry.²³

In other words, Paul's ultimate purpose is the glory and honour of Christ.

As **one author** wrote, “*Paul ministers not for personal gain or even the benefit of his converts, but for the glory and benefit of Jesus Christ his Lord.*”²⁴

This should not surprise us given Paul's explicit connection of gospel ministry to the exaltation of Christ as sovereign Lord.

²² Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press, 1988), 50.

²³ Moo, *Romans*, 52.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 52.

As we read this past Sunday in **Philippians 2:9-11**—

**9 God also highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name,
10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
11 and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.**

Therefore, we should remember that the gospel is the gospel of God—it is from Him and it is for Him.

As **MacArthur** observes—

“Man’s salvation is simply a by-product of God’s grace; its main focus is to display God’s glory.”²⁵

Since the purpose of the gospel is and its good news of God’s work of salvation is the glory of God, it follows that the ministry of the gospel should also be about the glory of God in Christ Jesus the Lord.

As **another author** put it—

“Bringing glory to God must always be the preeminent purpose of all ministry.”²⁶

Paul’s purpose as an apostle to glorify God in gospel ministry permeates his letter, as we see not only in the triumphant praise of **Romans 11:36**, **“From Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.”**

²⁵ MacArthur, *Romans*, 26.

²⁶ Moo, *Romans*, NIVAC, 38.

We also see the purpose bookend the epistle as Paul gives prominence to not just his goal in ministry, but also to his ultimate motivation to proclaim the gospel.

As we see in **Romans 16:25-27**—

²⁵ Now to Him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past,

²⁶ but now is manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all the Gentiles, leading to obedience of faith;

²⁷ to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be the glory forever. Amen.

As **John Stott** put it so well—

“The highest of all missionary motives is neither obedience to the Great Commission (important as that is), nor love for sinners who are alienated and perishing (strong as that incentive is, especially when we contemplate the wrath of God, but rather zeal—burning and passionate zeal—for the glory of Jesus Christ.”²⁷

Of all the elements of Paul’s ministry, this was surely the most important.

Every other element is surpassed and subsumed under the all-supreme purpose of glorifying the all-supreme Lord Jesus Christ.

²⁷ Stott, *The Message of Romans*, 53.

CONCLUSION

As we conclude, Paul's introduction of his ministry has taught us as much about the gospel as its taught us about his ministry.

Over the course of two sermons, we've learnt that the gospel is, "***of God, about Christ, according to Scripture, for the nations, unto the obedience of faith, and for the sake of the Name.***"²⁸

In short, Paul's message was focussed on Christ, but we've also learnt that Jesus Christ was the central focus of his apostolic ministry too.

For Paul, both his message and his ministry were Christ-centred.

That is significant for you as you realise that Paul's introduction of his ministry provides you with an essential model for your own gospel ministry today.

Christ must be the focus of your faith and worship, and also the focus of your gospel ministry.

Though you have not been uniquely called and commissioned to the office of apostle, you have nevertheless been commissioned by Christ to proclaim the gospel and thereby make disciples from all the peoples of the world.

²⁸ Stott, *The Message of Romans*, 53–54.

Therefore, Paul's Christ-centred ministry becomes the model for your own:

1. You've been **commissioned to** ministry by Christ through the Great Commission of Matthew 28.
2. Therefore, your **goal in** ministry is to proclaim the gospel for "the obedience of faith" which entails not only evangelising, but also discipling in the context of the local church.
3. The **scope of** ministry is not limited by ethnicity, but is universal to every tribe, tongue, people, and nation since Christ is the exalted Lord of all.
4. Finally, your **purpose in** ministry, as in life, is the glory and honour of Jesus Christ as Lord, so your labours in the gospel are ultimately for the sake of His worthy name.

The gospel message is about Christ, and gospel ministry is about Christ, therefore, follow Paul's example as you focus on Him in the good news you believe and the good news you proclaim.

BENEDICTION

Romans 16:25-27

²⁵ Now to Him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past,
²⁶ but now is manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all the Gentiles, leading to obedience of faith;
²⁷ to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be the glory forever.
Amen.

1:1	Paul,			Specifies the letter's author
b	└─ a slave of Christ Jesus,			
c	└─ called as an apostle,			Describes 1a
d	└─ having been set apart for the gospel of God,			
1:2		└─ which He promised beforehand		Describes "gospel" in 1d
b		└─ through	His prophets	Agents of 2a
c		└─ in	the holy Scriptures,	Location of 2a
1:3		└─ concerning	His Son,	Reference of 2a
b			└─ who was born of the seed of David	Describes 3a
c			└─ according to the flesh,	Standard of 3b
1:4			└─ who was designated as the Son of God in power,	Describes 3a
b			└─ according to the Spirit of holiness,	Standard of 4a
c			└─ by the resurrection from the dead,	Means/ time of 4a
d			Jesus Christ our Lord,	Appositional restatement of "Son" in 3a
1:5		through whom we received grace and apostleship		Description of 4d as instrument
b		└─ for the obedience of faith		Purpose of 5a
c		└─ among all the Gentiles		Location of 5b
d		└─ for the sake of His name,		Purpose of 5b
1:6		among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ;		Modifies 5d
1:7	to all			Specifies the letter's recipients
b	└─ who are beloved of God			
c	└─ in Rome,			Describes 7a
d	└─ called as saints:			
e	Grace to you and peace			Pronounces a blessing
f	└─ from God our Father			
g	└─ and the Lord Jesus Christ.			Source of 7e