

WHY THE LETTER OF ROMANS MATTERS ROMANS 1:6–7

INTRODUCTION

For the **past three weeks**, we've studied the introduction of **the greatest letter ever written**.

Paul opened his letter to the Romans by introducing both **himself as a minister**, and the **gospel as his message**.

Now, it's not as though Paul would have been **completely unknown** to the Christians in Rome.

Paul had dear friends who are part of the church in Rome—friends such as **Prisca and Aquila**, considered by Paul to be dearly loved as “**fellow workers in Christ Jesus**,” according to **Romans 16:3**.

There can be little doubt that friends like these would have told their fellow Christians in Rome about their friend, the apostle Paul.

Nevertheless, **since neither Paul nor one of his close associates** planted the church in Rome, Paul considered it necessary to start his letter by **introducing both his ministry and his message**.

He needed to establish more than simply the **recognition of his name and reputation**—he had to **establish his authority** as an apostle of Jesus Christ.

Therefore, Paul wrote the **longest and most theologically significant** introduction of any of his letters.

After studying this introduction for the past three weeks, we've learnt a lot about the life and ministry of the apostle Paul, and about the gospel message which was central to his ministry.

More than that, the gospel is, in fact, central to his epistle too as the **overarching theme of Romans**.

But for Paul, there is no way to talk about the gospel **without talking about Christ**.

So here in his introduction, Paul provides us with a **mini-Christology**, so to speak.

Paul explains that the **gospel focuses on Christ** who is the **eternal Son of God** who took on human flesh when he was born as the **promised Messiah** in the line of David.

Christ is also the **resurrected and reigning Lord** of all the nations whose **exalted status and sovereign power** allow Him to save His chosen people from among every tribe, tongue, people, nation.

Now, Paul's introduction of his **apostolic ministry and gospel message** brings us to **the final part of his introduction** as he describes **the recipients of his letter**.

With that, we are now in a position to answer the **all-important question** of why the letter of Romans matters.

Why does Romans matter to us as Steadfast Bible Church?

Why should we devote so much time and effort to studying this epistle?

Well, as we complete our study of Paul's introduction today, we can **find three answers** to the question why Romans matters.

There are **three clear reasons** that Romans matters to us.

1. Paul wrote it

The first reason is that Paul wrote it.

Why does Romans matter ? Because Paul wrote it.

Paul of Tarsus is a **fascinating historical figure**, and a study of **anything that he wrote** would certainly be worthwhile.

There are, however, **more important reasons** that Paul's **authorship is significant**, and as we look at his introduction we can find at least **four reasons**.

Firstly, **Paul's life is compelling** because he was radically **transformed by the gospel**.

Paul was not always a devoted follower of Christ, but used to **rage against Jesus and His disciples** as he **persecuted** the church.

Saul of Tarsus, Hebrew of Hebrews, renowned Pharisee and zealous persecutor of the church would have been **the very last person** that anyone would have expected to convert to Christianity.

But as he journeyed to Damascus, he **came face-to-face with the risen Lord Jesus** and his life was radically transformed as he was brought to repentance and faith in Christ.

Paul's conversion and commission on that Damascus road remains to this day **one of the most significant events** not only in the history of the church, but the history of the world.

So as we consider the life of Paul, we see the **clearest illustration** that the gospel is, as **Romans 1:16** states, **“the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes.”**

Therefore, Paul's life presents to us a **compelling motivation** to follow Christ and be transformed by the gospel.

Studying the letter of Romans allows us, then, to **see** and to **understand** and to **be encouraged** and **instructed** by one who was so radically transformed by the same gospel we believe.

Secondly, Paul's ministry which was **devoted to the gospel** **lends credibility** to his letter too.

From the point of his conversion and commission, Paul was **devoted to proclaiming** the good news.

As he wrote in **verse 1**, he had been **“set apart for the gospel of God.”**

In **Galatians 1:15**, Paul goes further to say that God had, **“set [him] apart from [his] mother's womb”** for the **proclamation of the gospel.**

Paul was so devoted to the ministry of the gospel that he told Ephesian elders in **Acts 20:24** that—

I do not make my life of any account nor dear to myself, so that I may finish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God.

As someone who devoted his life to the gospel, we should certainly consider Paul to be an **expert on the subject**.

In fact, we could accurately describe Paul as the **clearest and most articulate teacher** of the gospel message in all its detail.

He was recognised as such even by the other apostles, as Peter wrote in **2 Peter 3:15** of the wisdom God gave to Paul in order to **write so profoundly** that even Peter considered some of Paul's statements hard to understand.

Since Romans is **Paul's greatest letter and his most detailed explanation** of the gospel, it should certainly matter to us.

Thirdly, when I say that Romans should matter to you because Paul wrote it, **the most important reason** is that Paul's letter **carries the weight of his apostolic authority**.

The letter of Romans matters because it was written by Paul, not just as one transformed by the gospel, not just as one devoted to the gospel, **but as one who represented Christ**.

Paul was an apostle, **an authorised representative of Christ**, commissioned by Christ Himself to **authoritatively proclaim and defend** the gospel.

Christ chose Paul as His authoritative preacher of the gospel, as He said in **Acts 9:15**, **“He is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel.”**

As Paul would later recount his commission in **Acts 26:16-18**, Christ said to him—

16 “Rise up and stand on your feet; 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.”

That is exactly what Paul was referring to when he wrote in **verse 1** that he had been **“called as an apostle.”**

God had effectually called him to salvation in Christ **and** service of Christ as an apostle.

God’s call was **mediated through Christ** who commissioned Paul, which is what he meant in **verse 5** as the **“grace and apostleship”** he had received **through the Lord Jesus.**

As part of that apostolic ministry, Paul was **authorised and empowered** to write **inspired Scripture**.

So when Paul wrote Romans, **the Holy Spirit superintended** his writing in the special work we call **inspiration**.

As we read in **2 Timothy 3:16**, “**All Scripture is God-breathed and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness.**”

Therefore, Romans matters to us **because Paul wrote it**, and because Paul wrote it, the letter **carries his apostolical authority** as Christ’s representative.

Through the work of the Holy Spirit’s inspiration, this letter is **the very word of God**, absolutely free from error and perfectly invested with the authority of God.

The letter of Romans matters, because Paul wrote it while representing Christ, and so it carries the authority of Christ.

So Romans matters because it **establishes the doctrine and practice** of the church with the **authority of Christ as Lord of the church**.

Fourthly, as an apostle, Paul was not only an authorised representative of Christ, but he was **Christ’s special envoy to the nations**.

In **Romans 11:13**, Paul calls himself “**an apostle of Gentiles.**”

Paul always hoped, prayed, and ministered for the **salvation of his fellow Jews**, but Christ had given him a **special commission to focus** on proclaiming the gospel to the Gentiles.

Paul referred to that in **verse 5** when he said that he had, **“received grace and apostleship for the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles.”**

The letter of Romans, then, should matter to us **who have been chosen by God from among** all the peoples of the world, from every tribe, tongue, people, and nation.

So why does Romans matter? **Because Paul wrote it—**

- Paul who had been **transformed** by the gospel
- Paul whose ministry was **devoted** to the gospel
- Paul the **apostle**, the authoritative representative of Christ, and
- Paul, Christ’s **special envoy** to the nations.

2. It’s about the gospel

The second reason the letter of Romans matters is that it’s **about the gospel**.

Why does Romans matter? Because it’s about the gospel.

In Paul’s letter to the **Galatians**, he **defends the gospel** against **false and heretical errors**.

In his letter to the **Romans**, however, he **explains and expounds** upon the gospel—he gives a detailed account of the **doctrine and application of the good news**.

Now, as we learnt, “**gospel**” means “**good news.**”

It is the good news announcement of **God's work of saving His people in Christ.**

In **Romans 1:16**, Paul calls it “**the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes.**”

Romans matters because its **theme** is the **greatest message ever proclaimed.**

The gospel is the good news of the **greatest plan of salvation ever conceived**, and for us as believers, it is the **very message of our personal salvation.**

Now, by working through Paul's introduction we came to **understand a lot more about the gospel.**

Over these last three weeks that we have studied Paul's introduction, we've come to learn **six important aspects** of the gospel.

First, the gospel is **from God.**

That is what Paul meant, at least in part, when in **verse 1** he referred to it as , “**the gospel of God.**”

The gospel was **not invented by man**, but belongs to God as His plan of salvation.

In **Galatians 1:11-12**, Paul elaborated on this idea—

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.

So 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.

It is God's announcement of His work of salvation in Christ, so that we can rightly say that **the gospel is about God**.

The gospel is not about you—the gospel is **neither from man** as if he invented it, **nor is it about man** as if he were the focus of it.

Second, the gospel is focused on Christ.

The central focus of the gospel is Jesus Christ, or to say that another way, **the heart of the gospel** is the person and work of Christ.

The gospel is Christ-focused, which is why even in his introduction, Paul could not speak about his gospel message without focusing on the Lord Jesus.

As Paul wrote on the gospel, he gave us a **mini-Christology**—**a condensed study in the doctrine of Christ**.

Look back at **verses 3-4** as Paul explains that the gospel is—
3 **concerning His Son, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh,**
4 **who was designated as the Son of God in power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord**

In a **remarkably condensed but profound teaching** on Christ, Paul explained that Jesus is **the eternal Son of God**—the second member of the Trinity—and yet He took on a human nature in the **incarnation** and was born in the line of David as the **long-awaited Jewish Messiah**.

Furthermore, when He was raised from the dead, Christ was given **exalted, or high-ranking, power and status** as the **sovereign Lord**.

So the gospel is focussed on Christ as the—

- **Eternal Son of God**
- **Expected Davidic Messiah**
- **Exalted Lord**

Third, the gospel is **rooted in the Old Testament Scriptures**.

In verse 2, Paul said the **gospel was not new**, but had been “**promised beforehand** [by God] **through His prophets in the holy Scriptures**.”

Though the **Old Testament promised a Messiah** who would save God’s people, Paul also explains that the **gospel fully reveals what was mysteriously hidden** in the Old Testament.

As he says in **Romans 16:25**, his gospel message and “**preaching of Jesus Christ**” revealed “**the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past.**”

So the gospel **does not contradict or replace** the Old Testament promises, **but fulfils them in Christ.**

Fourth, the gospel is for all the peoples, both Jew and Gentile.

In verse 5, Paul wrote of his gospel ministry that aimed to bring about, “**the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles.**”

God's plan of salvation had **focused primarily on the nation of Israel** in the Old Testament, but in the gospel God reveals the **expanded scope of His salvation** to include every tribe, tongue, people, nation.

Since Christ has been **exalted to the high-ranking position** of Lord over all the nations and peoples, **the scope of the gospel includes all peoples.**

Simply put, **Christ is too great a Saviour** to save only Israel, but saves His chosen people from every ethnic group in the world.

Fifth, the gospel **demands the response** of obedience and faith.

God does not indiscriminately grant salvation to everyone, as if His salvation is universal to every man and woman, but rather as **Romans 1:16** states, the gospel “**is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes.**”

Paul describes the **appropriate response** to the gospel as “**the obedience of faith.**”

As we discovered, this is an important phrase in the letter of Romans and **Paul used deliberate ambiguity** to describe the **complete response that God requires.**

The initial response to the gospel is an **act of faith**, receiving all that God offers us in Christ.

However, that faith is **more than intellectual agreement** with the facts of the gospel.

Genuine saving faith **receives Christ as Saviour** and **submits to Him as Lord**, therefore faith is always **accompanied by obedience.**

Faith and obedience are distinct, but belong together like **thunder and lightning** in a thunderstorm.

The Reformers would say that we are saved by faith alone, but that the faith that saves is never alone—it is always accompanied by obedience.

Sixth, the ultimate purpose of the gospel is **the glory of God.**

Paul expresses that idea **implicitly** when he calls it, “**the gospel of God.**” It is God’s gospel—for the purpose of His glory.

We also see it **explicitly** in Paul’s **triumphant praise** in **Romans 11:36**, “**For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.**”

So the ultimate aim of the gospel is the display of God's glory.¹

That is, the gospel announces **the greatest plan of salvation ever conceived** which leads to **the greatest display of the glory of God ever possible**.

When God save sinners in Christ, **it does not make sinners look great**, but it does make God look great.

As **MacArthur** writes—

*“Man’s salvation is simply a by-product of God’s grace; its main focus is to display God’s glory.”*²

Another way to say that is that the gospel is **for the name or reputation of Jesus Christ**.

That's what Paul means in **verse 5** that his apostolic ministry of proclaiming the gospel is, **“for the sake of His name.”**

After Christ accomplished His work of salvation on the cross, God declared Him to be the **sovereign and supreme Lord, for the sake of His name among all creation**, as we see 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.

¹ John Piper, *God is the Gospel*, 56.

² MacArthur, *Romans*, 26.

Now, those six important aspects of the gospel help to further explain why the letter of Romans matters.

Romans matters because it's about the gospel, and the gospel is the good news announcement of God's saving working in Christ **which is the most important message that you'll ever hear.**

The gospel is the most important message because God uses it both **to covert His people** to Christ and **to mature them** in Christ,

Romans matters because it's about the gospel, and God uses the gospel to save you.

ITS INTENDED AUDIENCE

That brings us now, finally, to the **focus of our study today** as we examine **verses 6–7** in detail.

Here we'll find **the third reason** why Romans matters.

The third reason the letter of Romans matters is **because of its intended audience.**

Look again at **verses 6–7**—

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.

We've noted throughout our study of Paul's introduction that **Paul uses the conventional format** for a letter in his day.

Though Paul obviously adapts the format for his own purposes, it nevertheless **contains the three conventional elements** of the **author, his recipients, and a greeting**.

Verses 6–7, then, **communicate Paul's intended audience** for his letter, along with a **gospel-informed greeting**.

As we consider this **third reason** why Romans matters, **there are two points** that **we must examine**.

a. The unique historical audience

First, we must consider **Paul's intended audience** as he describes **the unique, historical recipients** of his letters.

That is, Romans has a **unique historical audience**.

We've already established through our overview that this letter was **written to the Christians in Rome**.

Paul states that explicitly in **verse 7** where, as you can see, he says that **he is writing to those in Rome**.

To briefly remind you, the church in Rome was likely planted by a group of **Jewish Christians** who had been converted under Peter's preaching at **Pentecost**.

Acts 2:10 records that there were **both Jews and proselytes from Rome** who heard Peter's sermon and **responded in faith**.

In all likelihood then, these converts eventually **returned home and gathered together** to form a local church.

The church would have been **predominantly Jewish** in its early years until the Jewish Christians were forced to leave Rome when the **Emperor Claudius** expelled them from about **AD 49–54**, as Luke indicates in **Acts 18:2**.

During that period, the church consisted **exclusively of Gentile Christians** who further increased in number through their evangelism.

By the time Jewish Christians were allowed back, they were **no longer in the majority** and found themselves **separated** from their fellow Gentile Christians because of their **stricter adherence to the Mosaic Law**.

As Paul writes to the church in Rome, **this division between Jew and Gentile** is an important issue that he deals with extensively in his letter.

Even as an apostle to the Gentiles, Paul goes to great pains to address the entire church, which is why he writes to **“all”** who are in Rome.

It's why Paul clarifies after saying in **Romans 1:16** that, **“the gospel... is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes,”** that it is **“to the Jew first and also to the Greek.”**

In other words, there is **one gospel** which is the good news of God's saving working in Christ for all people—both Jew and Gentile.

The Christians in Rome at the **time of Paul's writing in AD 57** are the **unique historical recipients** of Paul's letter.³

They are his **original intended audience**.

However, **as Paul describes their spiritual identity**, we find that **we share a common spiritual identity** which is the **second point** we must examine.

b. The shared spiritual audience

The identity of the shared spiritual audience **is what establishes the third reason** that Romans matters to us.

Paul's letter of Romans **matters to you if you share the same spiritual identity** as his original recipients.

As we look over **verses 6–7**, we see that Paul **describes the spiritual identity** of his audience **in three ways**.

Paul **describes the spiritual identity** of his audience as:

- i. **Effectually called**
- ii. **Eternally loved**
- iii. **Exclusively set apart**

i. Effectually called

Look at **verse 6**, as Paul has just indicated that **the gospel is for all peoples** and therefore the **scope of his apostolic ministry** is the nations, he then addresses his audience—
among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ

³ Schreiner, *Romans*, 3. See also, Naselli, *Romans*, 21.

As we'll see in a moment, and there is **profound significance** even in that phrase, "**among whom.**"

God does not save every man and woman, though He **freely invites everyone** to receive His salvation in Christ through faith, as the gospel is proclaimed to all.

Paul writes in **1 Timothy 2:3-4** that "**God our Saviour... desires all men to be saved and to come to the full knowledge of the truth.**"

So while the gospel is **offered to all**, **not all receive the call of God.**

Theologically, we refer to this as **God's effectual call.**

As one author defines it, **God's effectual call is—**

*"The summons to embrace salvation that is extended to the elect through the proclamation of the gospel and that guarantees a response of repentance and faith."*⁴

This is not the general call of the gospel for all to repent and believe, **but the special call of God** that is accompanied by **the power of God** that brings a spiritually dead sinner to life, as Paul describes in **Ephesians 2:4-5**—

⁴ **But God, being rich in mercy because of His great love with which He loved us,**

⁵ **even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved.**

⁴ Gregg R. Allison, "Effective / Internal Call," in *The Baker Compact Dictionary of Theological Terms* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books: A Division of Baker Publishing Group, 2016), 69.

It is this same effectual call that Paul refers to in **Romans 8:29–30** as **the call that realises God's eternal choice** of some through His foreknowledge and predestination.

Now, when Paul writes in **verse 6** of **“the called of Jesus Christ,” he does not mean** that Jesus is the one doing the calling.

The New Testament always speaks of **God the Father as the one who calls**.

Paul means, **then**, that from among all the peoples, **God chooses some and effectively calls them to belong to Jesus Christ**.

Those who belong to Christ are redeemed by Him, bought by His blood, and are united to Him by faith so that, as Paul often put it, they are **“in Him.”**

That's what Paul expresses in **Ephesians 1:7** as he writes, **“In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our transgressions.”**

Os as he puts it in **Colossians 2:13**, **“You being dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive with Him, having graciously forgiven us all our transgressions.”**

So then, to be called by God to belong to Jesus Christ is the **same as saying** that God has called us to salvation.

Now, we know that we have been called by God **when we respond to the gospel** with “**the obedience of faith**” that Paul talks about in **verse 5**.

In Acts 17:30, Paul declared that, “**God is now commanding men that everyone everywhere should repent**,” and in **2 Thessalonians 1:8** he describes the need to “**obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus**.”

So then, **you know that you have been effectually called** by God if your initial response to the gospel is an act of obedience as you turn in repentance and trust in faith.

As **Romans 1:16** puts it, if you are **among those who are believing**, you have experienced the power of God for salvation as revealed in the gospel.

Moreover, you know that you have been effectually called by God when you **continue to respond to the gospel** with **growing obedience that is produced by faith**.

Paul describes this **faithful obedience** at length in **Romans 6**, where he concludes in **Romans 6:22**—

But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you have your benefit, leading to sanctification, and the end, eternal life.

Later in the epistle, in **Romans 13:14**, he **urges those called by God** to, “**Put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts**.”

This is the **daily progress of obedience** to God that Paul describes in detail in **Ephesians 4:22-24**—

²² **Lay aside, in reference to your former conduct, the old man, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit,**

²³ **and [...] be renewed in the spirit of your mind,**

²⁴ **and [...] put on the new man, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.**

As we've already learnt, genuine saving faith **receives Christ as Saviour and submits to him as Lord**, therefore faith is **always accompanied by obedience**.

Those who are **called to belong to Jesus Christ** are marked by this “**obedience of faith**”—both faith and obedience.

You are saved by faith alone, but that faith that saves is never alone—it is always accompanied by obedience.

That is how you know that you have been effectually called by God to belong to Jesus Jesus Christ.

And if you have been effectually called, **then you share a common spiritual identity** with Paul's intended audience.

Simply put, Paul wrote his letter **intending that it would benefit you—he wrote it for you**.

Therefore, Romans matters if you belong to its shared spiritual audience.

ii. Eternally loved

The second way Paul describes the spiritual identity of his audience is in verse 7, as Paul addresses his letter—**“to all who are beloved of God.”**

The **“all”** here stresses the unity of Jew and Gentile in Christ, but all believers in Christ are identified as the **“beloved of God.”**

Paul elaborates on the **theme of God's love** throughout his epistle.

We find **one of the greatest declarations** of God's love for His people in **Romans 5:5-8**.

Turn and have a look with me.

In **verse 5**, Paul begins by stating that, **“the love of God** [which we should probably understand as the knowledge of God's love] **has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.”**

Then Paul continues to explain the magnificence of God's love in **verse 6**, **“For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.”**

In other words, while we had **nothing to commend ourselves** to God as lovable, Christ died for us in the **greatest expression of God's love**.

While we can understand **sacrificial love for a deserving candidate**, as Paul explains, **God's love surpasses our expectations** when Christ dies for us in an act of sacrificial love when we were undeserving—

7 For one will hardly die for a righteous man, though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die.

8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Simply put, the Holy Spirit **assures us of God's love** for us through the good news of **Christ's most loving act** for us at the point when we were at our most unloveable.

Paul picks of the theme of God's love again in **chapter 8**.

Even though he does not use the word “love” in the verse,

Romans 8:32 clearly **describes the love of God**,

“He who indeed did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him graciously give us all things?”

After that incredible statement, Paul asks in **Romans 8:35**,

“Who will separate us from the love of Christ?”

As we face every manner of opposition, Paul assures us that God's love is so great that **we can never lose it**, as he triumphantly declares in **Romans 8:38-39**—

38 For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers,

39 nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Now, this great love of God is **inseparable from His people** because it is **based not on their worthiness, but on His eternal choice.**

Paul makes this **connection clear and explicit** in **Ephesians 1:3-4**—

³ **Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,**

⁴ **just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him in love**

God's sovereign choice of those whom He would save to be His people **was an act of love**, as Paul says clearly.

As a believer, **your spiritual identity** as one loved by God is not based on anything in you that would commend you to God.

God's love is **not based on your 'love-ability,'** but on **His eternal choice in election.**

That's why Paul can go on in the next chapter to speak in **Ephesians 2:4-5** of God's "**great love with which He loved us,**" which was active and demonstrated even "**when we were dead in our transgressions.**"

God's eternal love is then the **motivation of His effectual call.**

To say the differently, God's effectual call is an **expression of His eternal love.**

It is the evidence of your effectual call to belong to Jesus Christ that provides the assurance that you share in the **common spiritual identity** of those **eternally loved by God**.

So again, this is Paul's description of the spiritual identity of those to whom he writes.

If you share in this common spiritual identity, **you are part of his intended audience**.

The letter of Romans matters **because Paul wrote it to you**.

iii. Exclusively set apart

Paul's third and final description of the **spiritual identity of his audience** is also found in **verse 7**, as Paul describes his recipients as loved by God and **“called as saints.”**

The term **“saints”** is one of **Paul's most common ways** to refer to Christians.

However, **our understanding of the term is often corrupted** by the **Roman Catholic misuse** of the term.

Roman Catholics use term “saints” to refer to a **higher class of Christian**—those who are **“super spiritual”** and have served Christ in some extraordinary way so that they receive special recognition.

Paul takes direct aim at this **error of “two-tier Christianity”** in **Colossians 2**.

He describes the proponents of this idea as “**defrauding**” believers in **Colossians 2:18**.

Instead of this misuse of the term, we should understand “**saints**” to be a description of the **spiritual identity of all God’s people**.

The word literally means, “**holy ones**” or “**set apart ones**.”

That's exactly Paul's intended meaning—**God has set believers apart from sin unto Himself**, so that they are holy ones.

So God’s people are His holy ones who have been **exclusively set apart for Him**.

The other term the Bible uses to describe our spiritual identity in this way is, “**sanctified**.”

When Scripture speaks of our **sanctification**, it most commonly refers to what theologians call, “**progressive sanctification**.”

That is, a Christian's daily progress in practical, lived-out holiness and obedience.

That’s what **Peter** refers to in **1 Peter 1:14-16**—

14 As obedient children, not being conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance,

15 but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your conduct;

16 because it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.”

But here in **Romans 1:7**, Paul is describing our spiritual identity in terms of **“positional sanctification,”** as theologians would say.

In contrast to progressive sanctification which is a **present experience**, positional sanctification is a **past experience**.

It's what Paul refers to in **1 Corinthians 6:11**. **After detailing our former sinful ways**, he writes, **“And such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.”**

That is the **past-tense, positional sanctification** that Paul is referring to.

If you are **eternally loved by God**, and that is **evidenced in your effectual calling**, then **God has exclusively set you apart for Himself**.

As one of God's holy ones, **God has selected you** so that your life will no longer be given to sin, but will instead be **exclusively given to Him for His purposes and pleasure**.

This is the third way in which Paul describes the **common spiritual identity of his intended audience**.

If your **identity as a saint or “holy one” of God** is demonstrated in a **daily setting apart** from sin for the purposes and pleasure of God, then you are **part of Paul's shared spiritual audience**.

If you have been **exclusively set apart for God**, then Paul wrote Romans for you.

Therefore, Romans matters.

Romans matters to us for three reasons:

1. **Because Paul wrote it**
2. **Because it's about the gospel, and**
3. **Because of its intended audience**

If you share in the common spiritual identity of Paul's audience as one who is effectually called, eternally loved, and exclusively set apart, **then Romans matters to you because Paul intended it for you.**

As much as you share in that identity, you are part of Paul's spiritual audience—he wrote Romans for you.

Paul's prayerful greeting

Now we'll conclude by looking at the **final part of verse 7**, which in an ordinary letter would be the **greeting offered by the author.**

As you can see, though, Paul has **adapted this for his gospel purpose**, "**Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.**"

He even uses a **clever word play** on the **customary Greek greeting** **χαίρειν**, which simply means "**greetings**" or "**to wish well.**"

Paul uses a word that sounds like **χαίρειν**—the word **χάρις** which means “**grace**.”

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*.”⁵

Paul combines “**grace**,” which plays off the **customary Greek greeting** with the word “**peace**” which follows the **customary Hebrew greeting**.

It reflects the Hebrew idea of “shalom,” which is the Old Testament word for the **well-being of the righteous**.⁶

As Paul uses the term, **peace with God and from God** is a **result of the gospel**, which is what he states in **Romans 5:1**, “**Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.**”

Paul then combines grace and peace in the **form of a blessing**, which is really **another form of prayer**.

So this is Paul’s prayer for his audience—both the unique, historical audience of the first-century church in Rome, and the shared spiritual audience of all who share in a common spiritual identity.

If you are effectually called, eternally loved, and exclusively set apart then not only is Romans written for you, but **Paul’s prayer is also prayed for your benefit**.

⁵ Cranfield, *Romans*, ICC, 71.

⁶ Douglas J. Moo, *Romans*, NIVAC, 39.

This is Paul's prayer for you—that God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ would grant you, through the study of the letter of Romans, more gospel grace which results in a daily experience of peace with God and from God.

BENEDICTION

Romans 15:13

**Now may the God of hope
fill you with all joy and peace in believing,
so that you will abound in hope
by the power of the Holy Spirit.**

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