

FOR THE SAKE OF HIS NAME:  
A MISSION TO MAGNIFY THE MAJESTY OF CHRIST

A Sermon on Romans 1:1–6

Jason S. DeRouchie, PhD

Thesis: In the opening of his letter to the Romans, Paul identifies his apostolic authority and characterizes his apostolic mission, highlighting both its gospel message and Christ-glorifying nature. In short, Paul’s mission is to magnify the majesty of Christ among the Gentiles.

*Rom. 1:1–7. Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God,<sup>2</sup> which he promised before through his prophets in the holy Scriptures,<sup>3</sup> concerning his Son, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh,<sup>4</sup> who was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord,<sup>5</sup> through whom we received grace and apostleship, for obedience of faith among all the nations, for his name’s sake;<sup>6</sup> among whom you are also called to belong to Jesus Christ;<sup>7</sup> to all who are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

## Introduction

I always feel a little apprehension when listening to a preacher for the first time. How serious is he about the Bible? How surrendered is he to its message? Does he savor our Savior, and will he help me do this more. The apostle Paul expected the church in Rome to be asking comparable questions as they received his letter, for neither Paul nor any of his co-workers planted the church there. Yet the apostle was eager for them to support his mission to Spain (Rom 15:24, 28), and he opens his letter by identifying his apostolic authority and by characterizing his apostolic mission. In Romans 1:1–6 he highlights his mission’s gospel message and its Christ-glorifying nature, and then he sets out in the rest of the book to demonstrate the truth and power of the gospel he proclaims. Because I want you not only to trust me as a mouthpiece of God but also to magnify the majesty of the Christ proclaimed throughout all of Scripture, I thought it good to focus our attention this morning on these foundational verses. To that end, let us pray. . . .

Romans is a missionary support letter, and here at the beginning Paul opens in v. 1 by highlighting the mission’s messenger, and then he continues through v. 6 by noting the mission’s makeup. Those are the two main parts of my message: the messenger and makeup of the mission.

### The Messenger of the Mission (v. 1)

The book opens abruptly: “Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God” (v. 1). In English we would most commonly

begin with, “A letter from Paul,” which verse 7 then says is directed “To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints.” In verse 1, Paul identifies his role, his office, and his task as a messenger of God. Let’s look at all three.

As to his role, he is “a servant of Christ Jesus.” Right from the start Paul draws attention away from himself to one he serves; “Christ Jesus” is his authority. Christ is a title, not a name. *Christos* is the Greek word that means “anointed one,” and the Greek Old Testament consistently uses this word to render the Hebrew title *maʿasîʾîah*  $\Omega$ , Messiah (cf. John 1:41; 4:25). Using the word order “Christ Jesus” rather than the more common “Jesus Christ” places focus on Jesus’ messianic role. So from the beginning Paul is wanting his readers to know that he is a follower and even ambassador of the hoped-for Jewish king whom saints had long anticipated would make all wrongs right, conquer sin, curb God’s wrath, and secure blessing for the world.

The language of “servant” likely says more though, for Isaiah the prophet stressed how, after the substitutionary atoning death and victory of Yahweh’s “Servant” king (sg), whom we know of as Jesus (Isa 42:1; 49:3, 5–7; 50:10; 52:13; 53:11), God would commission many priestly “servants” (pl) from both the Jews and the Gentiles to carry out the Messiah’s mission (e.g., Isa 54:17; 56:6; 63:17; 65:8–9, 13–15; 66:14). Paul saw himself as one of these ambassadors (Isa 42:6–7 with Acts 26:15–18, 22–23; Isa 49:6 with Acts 13:45–48; Isa 49:8 with 2 Cor 6:1–4). He was “a servant of Christ Jesus.”

Verse 1 tells us that he was also “called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God.” Here Paul discloses both his office and primary task. He was one of those distinct, authoritative early messengers of good news whose teaching was considered the very word of God. The base meaning of “apostle” is “one who is sent,” and Jesus commissioned Paul on the road to Damascus to proclaim his fame among the Gentiles, which Paul was now fulfilling by writing the Roman church. Paul’s role was that of a servant, his office was that of an apostle, and his task was related to the gospel.

### **The Makeup of the Mission (vv. 1c–6)**

With the mention of his task at the end of v. 1, attention shifts from characterizing the messenger to highlighting the makeup of Paul’s mission—a gospel mission. This unit has two parts. Paul focuses in vv. 1c–4 on his mission’s message, unpacking the nature of the gospel. Then in vv. 5–6 he clarifies the nature of the mission itself—to generate witnesses who will magnify the majesty of Jesus.

#### *The Message of the Mission: the Gospel (vv. 1c–4)*

The Lord commissioned Paul to a ministry focused on “the gospel of God” (v. 1). This could mean “good news” that comes from God—that finds its source in

God, and/or it could mean “good news” that is about God. Both are true when it comes to the gospel. I already noted how Paul’s use of “servant” in v. 1 likely identifies him as one of the numerous “servants” of the LORD whom Isaiah said would spring from the chief Suffering Servant’s ministry. The language of the “gospel” or “good news” also appears to derive from Isaiah, for he was the first to use this language in anticipation of God’s end-times reign through his messianic king. You can turn to Isaiah 40 if you want; we will briefly look at three texts in this book. In Isa 40:9–11, Isaiah declares, “Get up to a high mountain, O Zion, *herald of good news*; lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, *herald of good news*, lift it up, fear not; say to the cities of Judah, ‘Behold your God.’”<sup>10</sup> Behold, the Lord GOD comes with might. . . .<sup>11</sup> He will tend his flock like a shepherd.” If you feel weak today, Isaiah says there is good news—the Sovereign overseer of all things has come in power. If you feel lost or insecure today, there is good news—we have a good Shepherd to provide and protect. Now in Isaiah, how does God come in might? How does he serve as a Shepherd? Isaiah says God would reign on earth through his Servant king, whom we know as Jesus.

Now let’s go to Isaiah 52. Just before detailing in chapter 53 the wrath-removing sacrifice of the Suffering Servant, Isaiah says in 52:7, “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of *him who brings good news*, who publishes peace, *who brings good news* of happiness, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, ‘Your God reigns.’” Paul quotes this passage later in Rom 10:15, and it testifies to something being worked out right now in the church. Through Jesus’ victorious work on the cross, God has made a way for the world to know peace, happiness, and salvation. This is good news that must be proclaimed, for as the Sovereign, he is also the only Savior and only lasting Satisfier. Apart from him there is no lasting hope, but in Jesus (and only Jesus) there is lasting salvation and satisfaction for all who believe, who surrender to him as King.

Jesus quoted a third gospel text from Isaiah when he initiated his earthly ministry in Luke 4:18–19. Isaiah 61:1–2 reads, “The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me *to bring good news* to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound;<sup>2</sup> to proclaim the year of the LORD’s favor.” Jesus later said, “I must preach the good news/gospel of the kingdom of God . . . for I was sent for this purpose” (Luke 4:43). Jesus’ entire ministry on earth was bound up in the gospel of the kingdom—the good news of God’s reign through his Messiah (cf. Acts 1:2).

Now back in our passage in Romans 1. Paul sees himself as a good news preacher, a servant of Messiah Jesus, set apart to carry on the messianic mission that Isaiah foretold. The gospel finds its source and content in God, who reigns. The gospel of God gives hope to the broken, for God reigns over sickness and suffering

and can alone bring healing and help. The gospel of God gives relief to those in lack, for in Jesus every promise is Yes (2 Cor 1:20), and that includes, “My God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus” (Phil 4:19). The good news of God’s reign helps those struggling with sin, for “he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world” (1 John 4:4).

This is good news, and we are told in v. 2 that God promised it “before hand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures.” The gospel we celebrate is not new; it starts in the Old Testament. Before Jesus and Paul ever preached the gospel, the prophets of old promised it in the Old Testament. Paul’s “holy Scriptures” only included the first part of our Bibles, for the New Testament was only beginning to be written. And in the initial three-fourths of the Christian Scriptures, Jesus and his apostles found “good news”—good news of hope and life and help and healing—good news that Moses was already proclaiming back in Genesis. In Gal 3:8, Paul declares that “the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the *gospel* beforehand to Abraham, saying, ‘In you shall all the nations be blessed.’” Similarly, in Heb 4:2, the writer contrasts Christians today with the exodus generation who failed to enter the Promised Land. He says, “*Good news* came to us *just as to them*, but the message they heard did not benefit them, because they were not united by faith with those who listened.”

Far too many Christians think of the Old Testament as disconnected from the church. While we are no longer under the authority of the old covenant, the Old Testament as a whole is very much Christian Scripture that proclaims the majesty of our Messiah. If you want to know Jesus wholly, you must read his Bible, which was the Old Testament, for it is filled with pointers to him. Jesus himself said that he came to fulfill all the Law and the Prophets (Matt 5:17), and now because of him, Paul says to the Christians in Rome, “Whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction” (Rom 15:4).

Jesus said, “If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote of me” (John 5:46). And in Luke 24:26, the resurrected Jesus asked the two men on the road to Emmaus, “Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?” Luke then adds in v. 27, “And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.”

Back in Rom 1:2, Paul says that God promised “*beforehand*” the gospel we celebrate. The inclusion of “beforehand” is redundant, for naturally all promises precede their fulfillment. Yet by stressing in a double way that before his day the gospel was “promised beforehand,” Paul highlights that God’s kingdom plan has both foundation and fulfillment—the age of promise and the age of realization. We are living today in the age of fulfillment. If you find yourself having lived long in

darkness, longing for light, know this: The age of good news has dawned in Jesus. You have hope today.

Paul emphasizes the basis of this hope in vv. 3–4, where he highlights the central concern of God’s gospel—“his Son” (v. 3). Apart from Jesus there is no good news, only wrath. The gospel is about him because only by him is God’s wrath against sinners appeased and only from him is the necessary right standing with God enjoyed. To Jesus all Old Testament promises point and from him all fulfillment comes. He is the climax of history, the watershed of hope.

Notice that the gospel promises of old concerned God’s existent Son—not a mere human yet unborn who would one day be considered God’s Son but one who was already existing as God’s Son when the promises were made. The Son was always part of the Trinity, and the good news the prophets’ promised related to his eternal mission of magnifying his worth and the worth of his Father by redeeming a people who would cherish God. “Though he was in the form of God, [he] did not count equality with God a thing to be exploited,<sup>7</sup> but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men” (Phil 2:6–7). Paul also speaks of this move of the Son from heaven to earth in Rom 8:3, when he writes, “By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, [God] condemned sin in the flesh.”

At the heart of the gospel is God’s Son, who we next read in vv. 3–4 entered our world as the offspring of king David and then was installed as the hoped for sovereign over all. Notice the parallelism between vv. 3–4: God’s Son “was descended from David *according* to the flesh and was declared to be the Son of God in power *according* to the Spirit of holiness.” In Paul’s letters, the terms “flesh” and “Spirit” are always used to contrast the old creation and new creation, respectively. This suggests that vv. 3–4 in some way contrast Jesus’ earthly existence as the longed-for Messiah and the exalted status as king in power he gains after resurrection.

Jesus’ descent from David reemphasizes the grounding of his mission in the Old Testament and stresses the absolute necessity that he be fully human. In Gen 3:15, right after the fall of mankind into sin and death, we first learned that a male offspring of the woman would one day defeat the evil serpent and his influence. By the end of Genesis we learn that this enemy-defeating, blessing bringing individual would be a king in the line of Abraham (Gen 22:17b–18) and Judah (49:9–10). It is 2 Samuel 7, however, that focuses all hopes on a male descendent of David, who would also be called the “son” of God. Yahweh declared to David, “I will be a father to him, and he shall be to me a son. . . . And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever” (2 Sam 7:14, 16). For David’s throne to last forever would demand either an unending change of royal succession or a single king whose reign would never end. The Old Testament prophets clearly anticipated a single Davidic ruler (e.g., Jer 23:5–6; 33:14–17; Ezek

34:23–24; 37:24–25; Isa 11:1–5, 10; Hos 3:5; Amos 9:11–12), and the New Testament writings stress Jesus as the fulfillment of the Davidic kingdom promises (Matt 1:1; 20:30–31; 21:9, 15; Luke 1:27, 32, 69; 2:4; 3:23–31; Acts 2:30; 13:22–23, 32–34; 2 Tim 2:8; Rev 5:5; 22:16). Davidic sonship was a necessary requirement for the Messiah, and Paul here highlights the fulfillment of this hope. He also here stresses a key fact that he highlights in various ways through the book—that the Messiah came from the Jews (Rom 9:5), that the gospel is for the Jew first (1:16; 2:9–10), that the promises made to the Jewish people are being fulfilled (chs. 9–11), and that Gentiles should remember the Jewish root of the olive tree (11:15–18). Indeed, Jesus was the Jewish Messiah from the root of Jesse who Paul says later “rises to rule the Gentiles; in him will Gentiles hope” (15:12).

While v. 3 details Jesus’ earthly identity as the Jewish Messiah, v. 4 emphasizes his exalted status post-resurrection. The very one who, according to flesh, descended from David, “was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit.” This word rendered “declared” should be understood in the sense of “appointed” or “established”; at the resurrection the Father appointed his Son to a new status of power. This does not mean that Jesus was only recognized to be God’s Son at the resurrection. Nor does it mean that he only became God’s Son at this time, for I already noted that the first mention of his divine Sonship in 1:3 suggests is pre-incarnate existence. Instead it seems v. 4 accents that upon Jesus’ resurrection his status shifted so that he now stood as the reigning king. In Matthew’s words, upon Jesus’ resurrection, God bestowed on him “all authority in heaven and on earth” (Matt 28:18; cf. Dan 7:14). Or as the psalmist prophetically declares in Ps 2:7, “The LORD said to me, ‘You are my Son; today I have begotten you.’” Or as Peter says in Acts 2:36, “Let the house of Israel . . . know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.” In Philippians 2, after noting how Jesus was “found in human form” and “humbled himself by becoming obedient even to the point of death” (Phil 2:8), Paul testifies, “Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name” (2:9).

In Jesus, the age characterized by the flesh was overcome by the age characterized by the Spirit. The resurrection sparked the new creation and the kingdom reign of Jesus, so that Jesus Messiah is now also called “our Lord” (v. 4). Prior to his resurrection, Jesus was the hoped-for Messiah and the Son of God, but his death and resurrection inaugurated a new stage in his messianic existence, for he now reigns as the one who canceled the record of debt that stood against us before God and who disarmed the rulers and authorities that held sway over our souls (Col 2:14–15). In the words of Paul from Eph 1:22, God has now “put all things under [Jesus] feet and given him as head over all things.”

What this means is that there is no problem too big, no distance too far, no obstacle too difficult, no pain too great, no sin too pervasive for Jesus to meet you and

help you. He is able and willing to be all you need all the time—whether by removing your pain or by helping you through it to glory. He is the reigning Son of God in power, and that power becomes operative for us as we work out our own salvation (Rom 1:16).

Notice the link between the term “power” in v. 4 and its use in the familiar v. 16: “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God for salvation for everyone who believes; for the Jew first, and also for the Greek.” Salvation for Paul was past, present, and future. He can say, “By grace you *have been saved* through faith” (Eph 2:8). “The word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who *are being saved* it is the power of God” (1 Cor 1:18). “Since . . . we have now been justified by his blood, much more *shall we be saved* by him from the wrath of God” (Rom 5:9). For Paul Jesus’ reign in power is the very power by which we have been saved, are being saved, and will be saved—saved from our own sinfulness, saved from the curse, and saved from the certainty of God’s just wrath against sinners. The gospel is the power of God, because in it the Son of God in power is manifest.

### *The Nature of the Mission: Magnifying Christ (vv. 5–6)*

Jesus has all authority in the universe. Will you trust that he is able to help you? Will you follow him, believing that his way is best? These questions lead us to vv. 5–6, which unpack the nature of Paul’s gospel mission. Verse 5 says, “Through [this resurrected, Son of God in power] we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith . . . among all the nations.” Paul was a herald of good news, and the initial aim of his mission was “to bring about the obedience of faith.” “Obedience” is about following a leader, who in this instance is the Son of God in power. “Obedience” is the fruit of “faith,” for there is no reason to follow the resurrected Jesus unless you are convinced that he is believable and that his promises are desirable. Notice that Paul “received” grace and apostleship to this end. God the Father working through Jesus sent Paul to proclaim the terms of peace in order that those who were once enemies of God could be near him, could follow him, could find all the power of the resurrected Son working for them, protecting them, helping them, guiding them. What amazing love is bound up in the gospel. It truly is good news, for the only Savior and only lasting Satisfier is God.

Amazingly, Paul’s good news was to see the obedience of faith sparked “among all the nations, including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ” (vv. 5–6). There is hope for the Gentiles for from the Jews God finally raised up the royal deliverer. As God promised to Abraham, “In your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed” (Gen 22:18), now “in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham [has] come to the Gentiles” (Gal 3:14). “God so loved *the world*, that he gave his only Son, that *whoever* believes in him should not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16).

Regardless of one's color, ethnic background, or heritage, there is hope if you turn to Jesus, but God's wrath will remain on you if you don't (3:36).

Notice the ultimate goal of gospel ministry in v. 5: "through [Jesus] we received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith *for the sake of his name.*" This is the title of my sermon—"For the Sake of His Name: A Mission to Magnify the Majesty of Christ." In Phil 2:9, Paul declares that at Jesus' obedience to the point of death on a cross, "God . . . highly exalted him and bestowed on him *the name* that is above every name, so that at *the name of Jesus* every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil 2:9–11). Everything is from God; everything is through God; and everything is *to* God (Rom 11:36). Similarly, in Col 1:16, we read that "by [the Son] all things were created . . . All things were created through and *for* him." Worship is the most ultimate end of the gospel. We proclaim for the sake of the name—to declare Christ's fame throughout the world. The promise of the gospel reaches all the way back to Genesis, and God's kingdom plan builds and builds with the ultimate end being his glory shown through Jesus above all.

That everything in this world would end in praise to God in Christ is right, necessary, and loving. It is proper and right, because the triune Lord is indeed preeminent over all things and therefore worthy of highest worship (Exod 34:14; Deut 32:39; Rom 11:36; Col 1:16). It is necessary, for if the ultimate end of God's kingdom plan were anything but himself, something other than God would be of highest importance. This means God would no longer be God, and all the world would come to an end for we are sustained by his sovereignty alone (Isa 42:8; 48:11; Job 34:14–15; cf. Heb 1:3). Finally, that the ultimate goal of the gospel as the praise of Jesus is the ultimate expression of God's love, for our highest satisfaction and joy comes when we treasure him. He alone can save (Isa 43:10–11; 45:21; Hos 13:4), and he alone is the ultimate satisfier (Ps 16:11; Matt 13:44; John 15:10–11).

The Bible beginning in Genesis proclaims the gospel concerning Jesus, which is designed to help us enjoy relationship for the glory of his name. Celebrate with me the Son of God in power, who alone is our help, our hope, our joy. Believe that he is sovereign, able to supply your every need, able to sustain you through the pain of suffering, and able to save from every sin with which you struggle. Believe that he is God, and then follow. Follow close not turning to the right or to the left. Trust that his way is best, stay near your leader, and then give praise. Thank God for the hope that flows from the power of Christ (Rom 1:4) that in turn gives power to us—power to overcome, power to save (1:16).



FOR THE SAKE OF HIS NAME:  
 A MISSION TO MAGNIFY THE MAJESTY OF CHRIST  
 A Sermon on Romans 1:1–6  
 Jason S. DeRouchie, PhD

Thesis: In the opening of his letter to the Romans, Paul identifies his apostolic authority and characterizes his apostolic mission, highlighting both its gospel message and Christ-glorifying nature. In short, Paul’s mission is to magnify the majesty of Christ among the Gentiles.

- (1) The mission’s messenger (v. 1)
  - a. His role: servant of Christ Jesus
  - b. His office: called an apostle
  - c. His task: set apart for the gospel
- (2) The mission’s makeup (vv. 1c–6)
  - a. The message of the mission: the gospel (vv. 1c–4)
    - i. Its nature: the gospel (v. 1c)
    - ii. Its source and/or object: of God (v. 1c)
    - iii. Its promise (v. 2)
      1. The agents of the promise
      2. The vehicle of the promise
    - iv. Its concern/focus: God’s eternal Son (vv. 3–4)
      1. His earthly identity (v. 3bc)
      2. His exalted status (v. 4)
  - b. The nature of the mission (vv. 5–6):
    - i. Its immediate purpose: generate witness among the Gentiles who are called of Christ (v. 5bc, 6)
    - ii. Its ultimate goal: magnify Jesus’ name (v. 5d)