

For the Sake of His Name

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[0 : 00] I want you to open your copy of the Scriptures to the book of Romans. We started last week a new series in the book of Romans. And we're going to be here for a while. We're still in the opening verses.

We're going to look at the same passage that we looked at last week. But rather than focusing on the first four verses of the opening paragraph, we're going to focus on the last three. And so as you guys turn there, Romans chapter 1, verses 1 through 7, I want you all to stand with me in honor of God's Word.

The Apostle Paul opens this letter and writes, Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures concerning his Son, who 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 by his resurrection from the dead.

Jesus Christ, our Lord, through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations, including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ.

To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints, grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Father, thank you for inspiring these words through your Spirit.

[1 : 28] Thank you for letting us read them and meditate on them this morning. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. You guys take a seat. I'm sure that most of you noticed, if you turned on the television or if you were on your computers on the internet at all over the past few days, that on Friday, people all over the world, but especially here in the United States, were celebrating the 70th anniversary of D-Day, of the Allied invasion of the European continent there at Normandy on June 6, 1944.

And when you think back upon World War II, it's striking to think back upon it. It's striking to watch documentaries or even well-made movies that accurately represent that war and what the men and the women who served in that war went through.

It's striking. It's amazing. I was looking up some statistics this week about the war and realized that there were about, during the course of the war, there were about 6.3 million Americans who volunteered to serve in the armed forces, many of them fighting in combat.

That was in addition to the over 12 million people who had already been drafted or who were being drafted into the armed forces so that you have millions and millions of men and women fighting and serving in the military during that time period.

And you ask yourself the question, how in the world, if they're drafting over 12 million people, how in the world are there still more than 6 million people who are voluntarily going into the military during a time of war in which tens of thousands of men will die from America?

[3 : 09] Millions of people will die from around the world in that war. How in the world are they able to muster the kind of support behind the war that they had? And the answer, I think, is that there was a pretty clear mission before them.

I think that you can inspire people to do just about anything if you have a clear mission with a moral imperative behind it that everybody essentially agrees upon.

And that's what they had. They had a very clear mission to defeat Hitler and his armies and to defeat the Japanese and other allies of Germany and Japan, to win freedom on behalf of most of Europe, the freedom that had been taken from them by Hitler and his armies.

They had a very clear mission. They were saving millions of lives and setting even more people free through their actions. Not only that, but they were defending themselves and their own homeland from Japan.

There was a real threat, an imminent threat to the United States of America. They had a clear mission. And it was clear, even though at their entrance into the war, they didn't see and understand all that had been done, particularly in Europe.

[4 : 17] They weren't fully aware of the concentration camps and the great evils that had been done there. But nevertheless, they understood to a great degree the threat posed by Hitler and the evils that he had done.

So they had a clear moral imperative that lay behind their mission. A clear mission, a clear moral imperative that they all agreed upon. And they were able not only to muster the people, but they were able to accomplish great things.

They were able to accomplish the mission. And last week as we started this letter, we looked at the Apostle Paul, who he was. And we saw Paul as a man with a clear mission and a clear calling upon his life.

He introduces himself as Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God. He was an apostle. He was a preacher of the gospel.

He was one who had been set apart for the task of proclaiming the gospel to those who had not yet heard the gospel. That was his job. And we saw last week that in some senses, in very real sense, Paul's role is not reproducible.

[5 : 30] He was, after all, an apostle of Jesus Christ. That's what he calls himself in most of the introductions to his letters. Paul, apostle of Jesus Christ, or apostle of Christ Jesus, which meant that Paul, among the other handful of men who wrote parts of the New Testament and who followed Christ in his earthly ministry, Paul had been called specifically by Christ, set apart by Christ himself, charged with a mission by Christ himself.

Paul's role as an apostle was unique. We don't have apostles in this sense today. We have missionaries. We have people who are sent out.

That's what the word apostle means. One who is sent out. But we don't have apostles of Jesus Christ in the sense that the apostle Paul was an apostle of Jesus Christ. He was unique in that. And yet, in some ways, Paul's ministry was not unique.

In some ways, Paul's calling upon his life reflects the same calling that all of us have as followers of Christ. We can all identify ourselves as slaves, servants of Christ, bought by him, purchased on the cross by Jesus, and now in his service.

All of us can describe ourselves in that way. And all of us are called and set apart for the task of sharing the good news of Jesus with people around us.

[6 : 53] We all share that mission in common with Paul. So while he may have had a unique role, and he may have had unique authority that's not repeated today, his basic mission of taking the gospel to the ends of the earth remains our mission even today.

We have a clear mission. And we have a clear moral imperative that lies behind that mission because if we don't carry out the mission, the apostle Paul says in Romans chapter 10 that without someone to preach the gospel, how will they hear?

And if they do not hear, how will they believe? The answer is they won't believe if they don't hear the gospel, and they won't hear the gospel if people don't go out and faithfully proclaim the gospel.

So we have a clear moral imperative that without the preaching of the gospel, not only freedom, but millions, billions of lives will be lost for eternity.

We have a very clear mission that we share in common with the apostle Paul. And so I want us this morning to simply move down through this introduction to the letter and jump in at verse 5.

[8 : 03] And I want us to hone in on verse 5 because I think this verse can help us to see in a much more clear way what the mission itself entails. What's its purpose?

How is it done? What exactly are we aiming toward? So notice verse 5. He says that through Christ, we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of His name among all the nations.

Now, don't get thrown off by the word we here. This is sort of one of those we's. It's almost like the we of a queen or king of royalty. It's plural, but it's actually singular.

So Paul is saying we, that is I, have received grace and apostleship. So this is about his role as an apostle. But as we saw last week, you can't separate, for Paul, you cannot separate his calling as an apostle apart from his conversion to Christ.

Which is why he says that he was called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God. Because when he met Christ on the road to Damascus, all at once, he both had his eyes open to see the truth of who Christ is and was saved and was converted to Christ and simultaneously received his call from Jesus to become the apostle to the Gentiles, that is, to the nations.

[9 : 26] So you can't, for Paul, you can't break apart his calling as an apostle from his salvation in Christ. You can't separate those. And he doesn't separate them. He holds them together in verse 1.

He holds them together in verse 5. He says that through Christ, we or I have received grace. He's saved. And apostleship. He has a calling upon his life.

But here's the aim of both Paul's conversion and his calling as an apostle. And I would argue that this ought to be the aim for all Christians. And this ought to rest upon all of us as our calling.

We've received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of His name among all the nations. So I just want us to consider these two phrases.

What does the apostle Paul mean by bringing about the obedience of faith? And what does he mean by saying that he's doing it for the sake of Christ's name among all the nations?

[10 : 27] That phrase obedience of faith could be taken really in several ways, but there are three primary ways in which you could understand that particular phrase because it's a strange phrase. It's a strange way to word things.

In fact, we only find this particular phrase one other time in the New Testament. And it's at the end of the book of Romans in chapter 16. And you can look at it if you want, but it doesn't help us to gain it.

It doesn't give us any clarity on the meaning of the phrase. So this phrase could mean, it could refer to, the obedience that is produced by faith. We all know, Galatians, Paul says that faith works through love.

And in fact, he says that the only kind of faith that counts is faith working through love. So we know that faith produces love which produces works of obedience.

And so the apostle Paul could be saying here that his aim is to bring about the obedience that springs forth from genuine faith in Jesus. That makes sense. It makes sense within the context of Romans as Paul lays out in the Gospel of justification by faith alone in the first few chapters and then begins to switch gears and show how that, how believing in Christ alone for salvation and not trusting in your own works does in fact produce a changed life.

[11 : 42] He talks about that in this book. So it fits the context and it makes sense of the words. It could, of course, mean, it could mean that Paul is referring to the obedience that leads to faith.

So Paul is preaching and he's doing all of his work in order to call forth a kind of obedience that would lead to faith. But that, in fact, would run counter to the order of things in the book of Romans and throughout the New Testament.

Faith produces obedience. It's not the other way around. And then there's the third option which I said last week I think is the correct way to interpret this. And that is, I think that this refers to the obedience that is faith.

So it's not that faith and obedience are two separate things here. The obedience to which Paul refers is faith itself. I'll tell you why I think that. I want you to hold your place in Romans because although this phrase doesn't occur anywhere else in the New Testament, there's a similar phrase in 2 Thessalonians.

So if you hold your place in Romans 1 and turn over to 2 Thessalonians 1, Paul says something very similar to this here in this chapter of this particular book.

[12 : 49] He's talking about Christ's second coming in 2 Thessalonians 1. And he refers in the middle of verse 7 to the time when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire inflicting vengeance on those...

Now, note here. He uses two parallel phrases. Those who do not know God and those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

So for Paul, to not know God equals not obeying the gospel of Christ. But there's more. He says they, in verse 11, they will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His might when He comes on that day to be glorified in His saints and to be marveled at among all who have believed because our testimony to you was believed.

believed. So, to obey the gospel is the opposite of believing. Those who have obeyed the gospel are those who believed.

They believed the message that Paul preached. But those who did not believe are those who rejected the gospel, did not obey the gospel. They did not know God.

[14 : 09] So that when we come across this phrase in Romans 1 and in Romans 16, the obedience of faith, I think what Paul means to communicate here is the obedience that is faith itself.

Paul's aim in his preaching, in his ministry, and in his apostleship is to bring about the obedience that is faith in all the world.

That's his goal. Which is why he's constantly preaching a message that requires people to repent and believe. This is important for us because it reminds us, on the one hand, that the only kind of obedience that counts and that matters before God is the obedience of faith.

Is faith itself. We are reminded when we see a phrase like this at the very beginning of this letter, as Paul will go on to argue for the next several chapters, we are reminded here at the very beginning that we do not earn a right standing before God on the basis of our obedience or on the basis of our works.

It's not obedience to the law, even the law of God contained within the Torah. It's not obedience to the law that earns us a right standing before God. It's not the performance of good deeds or good works that enables us to have a place in God's kingdom.

[15 : 30] One thing counts. Faith alone in Christ alone saves. It is the only thing ultimately that matters.

Will that faith result in good works? Of course it will. Because it results in a changed heart. But don't confuse it with good works. It's not the same.

And we need to remember that as we go out to carry out the mission that we have been given, which is essentially the same as Paul in its basic functions, we need to remember that what we are calling upon people to do is not become church attenders.

That's important. That's an important part of the Christian walk is to be in church. The Scriptures command us not to forsake gathering together. But we're not trying to create church attenders. That's not our goal.

We're not trying to make people into Bible readers or Bible scholars. It's important to read and study your Bible, but that's not our goal. That's not the mission that has been given to us.

[16 : 28] What we are trying to bring about among the lost is faith in Jesus. And sometimes we make the mistake of communicating the Gospel in such a way that it no longer is Gospel because all they hear are demands, heavy demands.

Live this way. Conduct your life in this manner. Stop doing this, this, and this. And then you'll have hope. And that's not the aim of Paul's ministry.

It ought not to be the aim of our ministry. Our goal is to bring about one kind of obedience and that is faith in Christ. That's the message that we proclaim.

And we are reminded of that over and over throughout the New Testament. How does Paul answer the question when he's asked the question in the book of Acts? What must I do to be saved? What is his answer?

Believe upon the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved. This is the only command that we need bother with in the course of evangelism.

[17 : 30] We will follow it up in discipleship. We will follow it up by teaching them all that Christ has commanded us as He tells us in the Great Commission. We won't end here. We won't stop here.

But this is our initial goal. To move people to a place of faith and trust in Jesus. And never to confuse the way of salvation with a way of works.

A way centered upon what we can do and what our abilities are. We never want to confuse the Gospel. Because when we begin to mix those things together, the good news is no longer good news.

It's bad news. And you all know that. If you've ever tried to pull yourself up by your own bootstraps, if you've ever tried to just get things together, straighten out your life and get on the move and do the things that you're supposed to do, you know that being told to do those things over and over is not good news.

That's bad news. Because you can't pull yourself up by your own bootstraps. You can't just make yourself do what you ought to be doing. You can't. And even if you enjoy limited success, the standard of God's Word is full obedience to the law.

[18 : 46] And none of us are capable of rendering that kind of obedience. And so Paul doesn't call for that kind of obedience. Paul calls for the obedience of faith.

And we ought to call for the same kind of faith among those to whom we have been sent. But to who have we been sent? I mean, Paul says he's working to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of Christ's name among all the nations.

That's a good sort of clarion call for missions, isn't it? We had a couple of weeks ago, we had a missionary come and share with us about his plans for the future and share with us the biblical foundation under missions.

And that was a good rallying call for us as a church to begin to think that we need to be involved in things far and wide. We need to sow seeds elsewhere. We need to do things everywhere.

But I don't think that this verse is necessarily about doing something in China or South America or India. because notice what Paul says next.

[19 : 53] He's bringing about the obedience of faith for the sake of Christ's name among all the nations. Verse 6 Including you, the Romans, including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ.

And then the salutation of the letter to all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints. So Paul is saying that I count you Roman Christians among all the nations.

I count you among them. You are those called to be saints. You are those called to belong to Christ Jesus. You are among the nations. You see, we need to remember, we need to think of these things from the point of view of the Apostle Paul.

For Paul, the nations are all those outside of Israel. Those are the nations. I don't know if you've noticed, but not many of us in here, if any, are all that Jewish.

Right? I don't know if you've noticed, but we're pretty good distance from Palestine and from Jerusalem. We are among the nations. So that when you take the gospel to your neighbor next door, you're doing ministry among the nations.

[21 : 00] When you share the gospel with your co-worker, you're doing ministry among the nations. We are right now here in the nations. We are among the nations.

And so we don't have to go to far away places to follow Paul in this mission. You can just walk next door.

It's not that difficult. It's not that complicated. You can go next door to your neighbor and you're participating in this mission. Bringing about the obedience of faith for the sake of Christ's name among all the nations.

It's not terribly complicated. It's not terribly difficult. You don't have to raise any money or capital. You don't have to have a fundraiser in order to get everything together.

You don't have to spend a lot of time planning. You just need to know the gospel and believe the gospel and love the gospel and love the person next to you enough to tell them the gospel and you're participating in this mission.

[21 : 56] That's it. It's not complicated at all. It's a clear mission. It's a clear message. The obedience of faith among the nations who are our neighbors and co-workers and family members.

But what's the moral imperative? What is it? It's really twofold. On the one hand, we would say that we want to share the gospel with those around us simply because we are motivated by love for the people around us.

That's not complicated. In fact, I think if you move further down in chapter 1, I think Paul alludes to that sort of motive for evangelism. Look all the way down in verse 14.

He says that I am under obligation, literally he says, I am a debtor. I am a debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish.

And so I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome. A part of Paul's motive for preaching the gospel, whether you're talking about preaching the gospel to the lost as we're talking about this morning or to one another which we'll talk about next week, a part of the motive for preaching the gospel for Paul was the sense of debt that he owes to the lost.

[23 : 11] Well, why would he feel that sense of debt? He's not speaking of a debt here that he feels that he owes to God. That's not the kind of debt that he's talking about. He's saying, I am under debt, I am under obligation to Greeks and barbarians, to wise and foolish, to all kinds of lost people.

I owe them a debt. Why does Paul owe them a debt? What's going on in his mind? What's the kind of thinking that produces this kind of a statement? I think it goes like this.

I was one of you. I was lost. I was without hope. I was separated from Christ just like everyone else.

And then I wasn't. And then I was saved. And then he made himself known to me and he rescued me and delivered me. And who am I not to then turn back to those who are where I was and reach out a hand to them?

I am under debt to those who are in the place where I once was. And part of the moral imperative for sharing the Gospel with people is recognizing that we don't deserve the grace that we have received.

[24 : 30] We don't deserve it. So who are we to refuse to turn to others who don't deserve grace and extend grace to them?

We are obligated to those who are in the place where we once were because we ought to love those who need the things that we so desperately needed at one time. That's a part of the moral imperative for the mission that lies before us.

But there's something even bigger than that. There's something even more foundational than that. And that's what Paul says in the middle of verse 5 that he's aiming to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of the name of Christ.

That's the ultimate goal. That's the reason for the entire mission. It's for the sake of the name of Jesus. Paul's aim in all that he does is to bring honor and glory and praise to the name of Christ.

That's what he wants to do. And Paul's not alone in that. That's God's goal in saving people. When God goes about the business of rescuing people from hell, He does it not merely so that people can say, I've been rescued from hell.

[25 : 45] He does it so that they can say, I have been rescued from hell. Praise God for all that He has done to rescue me and save me. That's God's goal as He saves people.

Turn over to the Old Testament, to the book of Ezekiel, where there's language that is so similar to what Paul says here in Romans 1, 5, that I can't help but believe that this must have been in the back of his mind.

And in fact, this is one of those passages in the Old Testament that is usually identified as a New Covenant passage. In other words, it's a passage looking forward to the time when God institutes the New Covenant, the time that we now live in.

Ezekiel 36, verse 22, God says this, Say to the house of Israel, thus says the Lord God, it is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations to which you came.

And I will vindicate the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations and which you have profaned among them. And the nations will know that I am the Lord, declares the Lord God, when through you I vindicate my holiness before their eyes.

[27 : 13] He says, I will take you from the nations and gather you from all the countries and bring you into your own land. It's not for your sake, he speaks to his own people, it's not for your sake that I'm going to rescue you and deliver you, but it is for the sake of my name that I might be glorified among the nations and that the nations themselves might know and see that I am the Lord.

That's why I'm doing this. That's why I'm delivering you. That's why I'm saving you. That's why I'm rescuing you. And then if you read further down the passage, you realize that this is not merely a passage about Old Testament Israel.

This is looking forward to a time when God creates a new Israel. When God calls people from all the nations into what he says in Ephesians chapter 2 is one new man out of the two, Jew and Gentile.

From among all the nations, for the sake of his name, God is rescuing and delivering his people. That's why he saves people.

Yes, he saves people because he loves people. For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son. Yes, but far more, far deeper, he saves people for the sake of his name.

[28 : 42] Because he has a goal in mind. He has a day in view in which people from every nation and in every language will sing praise and honor and glory to Jesus.

You get a glimpse of that day in the book of Revelation. Revelation chapter 7. It's beyond the screen. Verse 9. John says, After this I looked and behold a great multitude that no one could number from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes with palm branches in their hands and crying out with a loud voice, Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne and to the Lamb.

What's the primary motive for the mission that we have been given? The sake of the glorification of the name of Jesus Christ among the nations which includes our neighbors, family members and co-workers.

That God's name might be magnified among your family members. That His name might be magnified on your block and on your street. So, I'll admit to you that there are times when some people who need to hear the gospel are just irritating to me.

and I just, in the moment, I cannot muster a whole lot of sympathy or love for them in that moment. I just don't really like them in the moment at times.

[30 : 22] They're just irritating. They just do things and say things and just, they just bother you sometimes. And in those moments where most people would turn away because they're no longer motivated by love for them and the sense of debt towards those who are where they once were, in those moments, a stronger, a greater moral imperative comes into view for the sake of the name of Christ that He might be praised from the lips of the most irritating person I have ever met in my life.

I will share the gospel. I will sit. I will open the word. And I will prayerfully begin to move them towards the point where I give them the one command that counts.

Believe on the Lord Jesus and you will be saved. We have a simple mission statement as a church. We exist to glorify God.

That's the primary moral imperative. We exist to glorify God by making disciples of Jesus Christ. And that's true for us as a church, but it is also true for you as an individual.

You are here to bring honor and glory and praise to the name of Jesus. How? By what means? It starts with calling for the obedience of faith among the nations.

[31 : 49] And it continues as you follow through with the great commission of teaching them to obey all that He has taught us. But never reverse them. Never mistake them.

Your first task is to seek the obedience of faith from among your neighbors and family members and co-workers and strangers in the mall.

to obey all that He has taught us. let's go ahead and see you and see you next time. Let's go ahead and see you next time. Let's go ahead and see you next time.