

## Introduction to the Book of Romans

### Romans Sermon #1

#### Romans 1:1 – 6

#### Sermon by Pastor Sylvia Chan

Today we begin to study the book of Romans, but from time to time I may still talk about the titles of Christians and even the titles of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible mentions many titles of the Lord Jesus and of Christians, but I don't want to dwell on a certain topic for too long. I am also eager to start the book of Romans as soon as possible. But if the Lord permits, I will still talk about some titles of Christians once in a while.

The book of Romans talks about “righteousness,” “faith,” “justification” and Yahweh God's salvation plan.

(To justify means to make righteous; for example, to justify someone means to make him righteous. The noun “justification” is the action of making righteous; for example, the justification of someone means the action of making him righteous.)

Studying the book of Romans helps us to examine our own faith to Yahweh God and to the Lord Jesus Christ. When we preach the gospel to non-believers about righteousness, faith, justification and salvation, we can follow the method and the steps in the book of Romans.

<sup>NASB</sup> **Romans 1:1 – 6** Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called *as* an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, <sup>2</sup> which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures, <sup>3</sup> concerning His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh, <sup>4</sup> who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord, <sup>5</sup> through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about *the* obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for His name's sake, <sup>6</sup> among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ. (Rom 1:1-6 NASB)

The meaning of this passage is very deep; let's study it verse by verse.

#### 1. Paul, a bond-servant and an apostle

**Romans 1:1** Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called *as* an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God

- **Bond-servant**

Here in Romans 1:1 Paul says he is a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle. “Bond-servant” is a favorite title of Paul and of other disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ. In their letters to the churches, they would often call themselves bond-servants of Jesus Christ or bond-servants of God. Many people think that a bond-servant is similar to a servant, and is just an old way of calling a servant. Actually there are vast differences between a bond-servant and a servant according to our modern understanding of the term “servant”.

The original Greek word for “bond-servant” is δούλος (*doulos*). According to Greek-English dictionaries, *doulos* means a slave. He is like a piece of property that belongs to his owner; the word pertains to being under someone’s total control, which means that a bond-servant (*doulos*) is under the total control of his or her master. This is very different from a “servant” in modern-day language.

When Paul says he is a bond-servant of Jesus Christ, he is saying that Christ has complete control over him, and he submits totally to Christ.

- **An apostle**

Paul also says he was called as an apostle. What is an apostle? The original Greek word for “apostle” is ἀπόστολος (*apostolos*).

According to Greek-English dictionaries, the word *apostolos* simply means a delegate, a messenger. But that is not the meaning of apostles in the New Testament, the word *apostolos* as used in the New Testament has a special meaning. Let’s look at two passages:

<sup>NASB</sup> **Luke 6:13** And when day came, He called His disciples to Him and chose twelve of them, whom He also named as apostles (Luk 6:13 NASB)

Here the word “He” refers to the Lord Jesus; the Lord called the disciples to Him and he chose twelve of them and named them apostles.

<sup>NASB</sup> **Mark 3:14** And He appointed twelve, so that they would be with Him and that He *could* send them out to preach (Mar 3:14 NASB)

Here the Lord Jesus appointed twelve disciples so that they would be with him and he could send them out to preach.

When we combine these two passages, Luke 6:13 and Mark 3:14, together, we see that in the New Testament, an apostle is more than just a delegate or a messenger. An apostle in the New Testament is someone appointed by the Lord Jesus, and who is to be with the Lord, and who is to be sent out to preach the gospel.

Some people may wonder if Paul was really appointed by the Lord Jesus to be an apostle. The Bible did say that the 12 disciples were appointed by Jesus to be apostles, but Paul was not among the 12, he was not one of 12 apostles.

Actually Paul was chosen by the Lord to be sent out to preach the gospel, that's exactly what the Lord Jesus said concerning him.

<sup>ESV</sup> **Acts 9:1 – 8** But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. <sup>3</sup> Now as he went on his way, he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. <sup>4</sup> And falling to the ground he heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" <sup>5</sup> And he said, "Who are you, Lord?" And he said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting." <sup>6</sup> But rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do." <sup>7</sup> The men who were traveling with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one. <sup>8</sup> Saul rose from the ground, and although his eyes were opened, he saw nothing. So they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. (Act 9:1-8 ESV)

After the Lord Jesus was resurrected, he told his disciples to continue to preach the gospel to all nations, then he ascended to heaven. The disciples carried out the Lord's command; they preached the gospel everywhere, and they were called the "Way".

Saul was Paul's old name. Saul was very zealous for the traditional teaching of the Jews. This passage here tells us how Saul was persecuting the disciples of the Lord. He asked the high priest to give him letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that when he finds anyone belonging to the "Way," he could take them as prisoners to Jerusalem. As he was approaching Damascus, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" Saul asked, "Who are you, Lord?" The voice said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting." Then the Lord Jesus told Saul to go into the city to Damascus. Saul got up from the ground, but couldn't see anything. He had been blinded by the light; then his people brought him into Damascus.

<sup>NIV</sup> **Acts 9:15 – 16** But the Lord said to Ananias, “Go! This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel. <sup>16</sup> I will show him how much he must suffer for my name.” (Acts 9:15–16 NIV)

Here the Lord Jesus told a disciple named Ananias in Damascus to lay hands on Saul to restore his eyesight. The Lord told him that Saul was his chosen instrument to proclaim his name to the Gentiles and their kings, and to the people of Israel, and that Saul would suffer for the Lord’s name.

From these two passages we see that Saul was truly chosen by the Lord Jesus to preach the gospel, he was truly an apostle in the New Testament sense.

## **2. Yahweh God promised the gospel through His prophets**

In Romans 1:2 (which speaks of the gospel He promised beforehand through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures), Paul says that Yahweh God had promised the gospel through His prophets.

When we talk about prophecies and the gospel, we are talking about the prophecies concerning the coming of righteous king and his teaching. Indeed there are many prophecies in the Hebrew Bible about the coming of this king.

Most people are familiar with the prophecies about the birth of the Lord Jesus, because they would encounter them at Christmas every year; therefore I will not mention these prophecies, but would quote some other meaningful prophecies.

<sup>NASB</sup> **Ezekiel 34:23 – 24** “Then I will set over them one shepherd, My servant David, and he will feed them; he will feed them himself and be their shepherd. <sup>24</sup> And I, the LORD (Yahweh), will be their God, and My servant David will be prince among them; I the LORD (Yahweh) have spoken.” (Eze 34:23-24 NASB)

Please take notice that verse 24 says, “My servant David will be prince among them”; the word “prince” simply means “ruler,” it doesn’t mean “the son of the king” as most people think. Here the prophet Ezekiel was talking about the coming of this ruler.

Also when it says “my servant David,” it doesn’t refer to king David specifically, because king David lived far before the time of the prophet Ezekiel; David had been long gone by the time of Ezekiel. The term “David” refers to the descendant in the line of David. This passage says that this coming ruler will be a descendant in the line of David.

<sup>NASB</sup> **Jeremiah 23:5 – 6** “Behold, *the* days are coming,” declares the LORD (Yahweh), “When I will raise up for David a righteous Branch; And He will reign as king and act wisely, And do justice and righteousness in the land. <sup>6</sup> In His days Judah will be saved, And Israel will dwell securely; And this is His name by which He will be called, ‘The LORD our righteousness.’” (Jer 23:5–6 NASB)

Here the LORD (Yahweh) spoke through the prophet Jeremiah, saying that He will raise up a righteous Branch among David’s descendants. He (this descendant) will reign as king, he will act wisely and do justice and righteousness in the land. In his days both the kingdom of Judah and the kingdom of Israel will be saved and will dwell securely.

At the time Jeremiah wrote this passage, Israel had already been divided into two kingdoms: the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah (please refer to my Christmas message “Immanuel – God With Us” for more information about the history of the two kingdoms). And this king will be called “the LORD (Yahweh) our righteousness”; it doesn’t mean that this king is Yahweh Himself, but the Spirit of Yahweh dwells in him.

### **3. Jesus was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead**

Now let’s continue to look at Romans 1:3 – 4.

**Romans 1:3 – 4** concerning His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh, <sup>4</sup> who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord,

This passage is saying that according to the flesh, the Lord Jesus Christ was a descendant of David.

Please take notice of verse 4, “who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead...” Do you feel surprised and uncomfortable with this verse? I felt uncomfortable with this verse. Why?

The Lord Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and that is a fact. John the Baptist recognized him as the Son of God right at the moment he saw the Lord. The devil (Satan) recognized him as the Son of God. Even the demons recognized him as the Son of God, and when the Lord Jesus ordered them to come out from people, they would come out right away and obediently.

But how come this verse says he was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead? Does it mean that he was not the Son of God before his resurrection? Was it only at the resurrection that he was declared the Son of God?

First of all, the term “son of God” has various meanings, and indeed many people in the Bible are called sons of God. It is not unique to the Lord Jesus. Even Adam was called the son of God.

<sup>NASB</sup> **Luke 3:38** the son of Enosh, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God. (Luk 3:38 NASB)

Because Adam was created by God, therefore he is called the son of God.

<sup>NASB</sup> **Job 1:6** Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them. (Job 1:6 NASB)

Even Satan is a son of God in this verse, by the fact that Satan is said to be “among” the sons of God. The angels are sons of God, they were all created by God; even Satan was also created by God; he is among the angels, he is also a son of God in some meaningful sense.

But Romans 1:4 says that Jesus “was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead”; the term “Son of God” in that verse carries a very deep and important meaning.

After the Lord Jesus was resurrected, he met with the disciples and told them that all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to him. Then he sent them out to preach the gospel, to make disciples of all nations:

<sup>NASB</sup> **Matthew 28:16 – 19** But the eleven disciples proceeded to Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had designated. <sup>17</sup> When they saw Him, they worshiped *Him*; but some were doubtful. <sup>18</sup> And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. <sup>19</sup> Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit” (Mat 28:16-19 NASB)

Here in vv.18 – 19 the Lord said, “All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.”

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to the Lord. Before his resurrection he had the power to perform miracles, to drive out demons etc, but he didn't have all the authority in heaven and on earth that would be later given to him. It was only after the resurrection that he has all authority.

The term "Son of God" in Romans 1:4 has a special meaning: to be declared the Son of God with power means that he has all authority in heaven and on earth.

Because Jesus obeyed Yahweh God unto death, and because he had lived a sinless life, and because he defeated Satan completely not by physical weapons but by his perfect and sinless life, therefore all authority in heaven and on earth was given to him, and he can send disciples out to preach the gospel to bring salvation to all mankind.

#### **4. The obedience of faith**

We don't just emphasize that the Lord's sinless life has defeated Satan completely, we ourselves have to obey the teaching of Yahweh God totally. And when we preach the gospel to people, we have to emphasize obedience to the teaching of the Lord Jesus.

<sup>NASB</sup> **Romans 1:5 – 6** through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about *the* obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for His name's sake, <sup>6</sup> among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ (Rom 1:5 – 6 NASB)

Here apostle Paul says we ought to bring about the obedience of faith among the Gentiles. If we truly believe in the Lord Jesus, we would obey his teaching; if we don't obey his teaching, we don't really believe in him. And if we don't believe in the Lord Jesus, we won't have salvation.

#### **5. Conclusion**

Now let's sum up everything we have studied today.

First of all, Paul declared that he was a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, and an apostle set apart for the gospel of God.

Paul said that Yahweh God had promised a ruler to take care of His people. This ruler would be a descendant of David, and would die and be resurrected. Then he would be declared the Son of God, with all authority on heaven and in earth given to him. That's our Lord Jesus Christ. When we preach the gospel to people, we have to emphasize obedience to the teaching of the Lord.