

**Romans 1:1-7**  
**(Jeremiah 1:4-8; John 15:15-17)**  
**“Called and Sent”**

**Introduction**

When I first came to you as pastor twenty-one years ago, the first book we studied together on Sunday mornings was this letter to the church at Rome. Over the years, I have continued to study this letter and, hopefully, to grow in my understanding of it. No other book of the Bible has been used of God to transform as many well-known Christian leaders in their understanding of the gospel and of God’s plan for the salvation of his people. We could easily spend the rest of the morning telling the stories of such leaders as Augustine, Luther, Tyndale, Wesley, Barth, Lloyd-Jones and John Stott, all of whose lives were transformed by their study of this letter.

Paul almost certainly wrote the letter while staying for three months in Corinth at the end of his third missionary journey, around the year 55 AD, as he prepared to make what turned out to be his final journey to Jerusalem, bearing gifts from his Gentile congregations for their Jewish brothers and sisters in the Jerusalem church. From Jerusalem, Paul planned to go on mission to Spain, and he hoped on the way to stop in Rome in order to form a partnership with Roman Christians and establish a mission base for his planned work in Europe. So the letter is a magisterial introduction to Paul’s understanding of the gospel and of its implications in the life and mission of God’s people.

In these opening seven verses, Paul begins to outline his understanding of his own identity as an apostle of Jesus Christ, of the gospel entrusted to him, and of the scope of his mission. This morning, I will contend that – except for his unique calling as an Apostle (with a capital “A” designating a unique first-century office established by Christ for the foundation of the New Covenant community) – *there is nothing that Paul says here of himself that we who are in Christ should not be able to say of ourselves as we seek to understand the meaning of our lives.*

The three questions that Paul answers in these verses concern the most basic questions of identity and mission:

- Who am I?
- What has been entrusted to me?
- What is my mission?

We spend so much time pursuing our passions and desires without, perhaps, ever asking whether or not what we are pursuing is worth our gifts, or our resources, or our time. Who am I and what am I living for? What will I think of these days when at last I lie dying and realize that I must give account of my life to the One who has given me life? The New Year is a good time to ask such questions.

## **Body**

### **1. Who am I (1:1)?**

I am a servant of Christ.  
I am called in order to be sent.  
I am set apart for the gospel of God.

### **2. What is this good news that has been entrusted to me (1:2-4)?**

The gospel is about God's Son, Jesus.  
Jesus' coming was promised by the prophets.  
Jesus' identity was confirmed by his resurrection from the dead.

### **3. What is my mission (1:5-7)?**

The personal dimension: receive his grace and responding to his call.  
The global dimension: a passionate gospel concern for all nations.  
The relational dimension: a passionate gospel connection to particular people (to Jerusalem, then Rome, then Spain).

## **Conclusion**

Paul's concluding words remind us the riches that are ours in Christ: God has lavished upon us his love and grace and peace. But he has done this so that we might pass them on, by passionately supporting his mission to all the nations, and by passionately engaging particular people whom he has placed within our circle of influence, or to whom he would send us as bearers of his life, his truth and his love. Nothing else in life can compare with this: no honor, no wealth, no pleasure compares to the joy of giving our lives in service of the One who gave his life for us.

May God this year take us deeper than ever into the life he has entrusted to us in Christ Jesus: "to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations."

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