

**Romans 1:1-7**  
**(Jeremiah 29:11-13; John 15:16-17)**  
**“Set Apart for the Gospel”**

## **Introduction**

When I first came to you as pastor twenty-five years ago, the first text I preached was this opening passage of Paul’s letter to the church at Rome. In these verses, Paul begins to outline the three great themes of his life and ministry: First, his understanding of his own identity as an apostle of Jesus Christ, secondly, his understanding of the gospel entrusted to him, and thirdly, his understanding of the nature and scope of his mission.

I believed back then in January of 1990, and I believe still, that – with the exception of 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 about 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 and of the work entrusted to us.*

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

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

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 for each of us who claims to be a child of God, a disciple of Jesus Christ, a member of his church, to ask such questions as these. It is so easy to drift through life spiritually, while giving ourselves fervently and effectually to things that are passing away.

## **Body**

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

A Christian is a servant of Christ.  
A Christian is called in order to be sent.  
A Christian is 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 the fulfillment of God's ancient promise to rescue humanity.  
The gospel is about God's Son, Jesus, who is truly man and truly God.  
The gospel tells us that Jesus is not only our Savior, but also our Lord.

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

The personal dimension: receive his grace and respond to his call.  
The global dimension: a passionate gospel concern for all nations.  
The relational dimension: a passionate gospel connection to particular people: Do we care deeply for the congregation where the Lord has called us to worship and serve, as Paul did for the particular congregations under his care?

## **Conclusion**

Paul's concluding words remind us of 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 in this new year take us deeper than ever before 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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