

# Sermon Notes

Romans 1:1-7 - "The Purpose Driven Church"  
A Sermon Series on the Epistles to the Romans (September 25, 2016)

## Introduction

- 1) The concept of being "purpose driven" has been very popular in American Evangelicalism for the last twenty years.
  - a) As seen by such influential books as "The Purpose Driven Church" and "The Purpose Driven Life" and church programs like the "40 Days of Purpose."
  - b) The main concept of being "purpose driven" is to focus the congregation on growth by making the church, and especially the worship service, as entertaining, relevant, practical and accessible to the world as possible.
  - c) This approach has become the norm for much of modern Evangelicalism, with preachers even preaching on "having purpose" instead of the Bible.
  - d) Though very popular, and worldly successful, it is a very dangerous ideology.
    - i) The assumption that the church has no purpose until given by some entertainment based business guru is simply offensive.
    - ii) It also arrogantly assumes we have the authority to assign and define the purpose of the church, which we do not.
- 2) The underlying problem of being "purpose driven" is a misunderstanding of the very purpose of the church.
- 3) Martin Luther defined this problem by describing two different approaches to the church, one of them from the world and the other from the Scriptures:
  - a) **Theology of Glory** (*theologia gloriae*) – a bad thing! Matt 4:3,5-6,8-9
    - i) Focuses on what Christians should be doing for Christ. (Such as growing the church, living successful and victorious lives, etc.)
    - ii) Thus our right standing before God is earned by our actions.
    - iii) So worship, preaching, teaching and the Christian life should be centered around encouraging Christians to do more to prove they are holy, which will bring them assurance that they are really Christ's because of their good works.
    - iv) Though this is very appealing to Americans, it isn't biblical and leads to legalism and despair.
  - b) **Theology of the Cross** (*theologia crucis*) – a good thing! 1Cor 1:18-2:16; Rom 8:28-39
    - i) Focuses on who Christ is and what He has done.
    - ii) Thus our right standing before God comes only from Christ's righteousness credited to us. (Technically known as a "forensic alien imputed righteousness.")
    - iii) So worship, preaching, teaching and the Christian life should be centered around hearing, tasting and understanding what Christ has done. This good news will bring conviction of sin, repentance, faith, assurance which will produce holiness & good works because they are based in Christ's work on the cross.
    - iv) The Theology of the Cross isn't opposed to good work! It correctly understands good works are the byproduct of the Gospel, not its cause. Which is the very outline of the Book of Romans!
- 4) No book in the Bible so clearly speaks of the purpose of the church as the Book of Romans.

## Introduction to the Book of Romans

- 1) Romans was written by the Apostle Paul around the year 54 AD Rom 16:23  
while he was in Corinth.
- 2) It was written to the church in Rome, the great capitol city of the Roman Empire. Rom 1:7
- 3) It was one of the few churches Paul hadn't founded or visited. Rom 1:10-15
  - a) Because of this, Paul writes it as a way of introduction, which makes it so special.
  - b) In no other book in the Bible is the core, universal message and purpose of the faith so clearly and precisely laid out and explained.
  - c) It systematically explains & defends the Gospel to a church Rom 1:13-16; 3:8; 9:1-2  
that had not yet received direct apostolic teaching.
- 4) Because of this, Romans is considered one of the greatest and most important books in the Bible for any Christian to know and understand.

## Romans 1:1-7

- 1) Our purpose doesn't come from things which we do, but what has been done!
- 2) Note how Paul begins this magisterial letter by describing the purpose of the church.  
(It is a common mistake to rush through the biblical author's introductions.)
- 3) Paul, and all Christians, are "bond-servants" (literally "slaves") of Christ Jesus. Rom 1:1; 1Cor 7:22; 2Cor 4:5; Gal 1:10; Eph 6:5; James 1:1; 1Pet 2:16; Jude 1
  - a) This is a simple but profound statement.
  - b) The Lord Jesus tells us what to believe, do, and think, not the other way around!
- 4) Where do we go to hear the voice of our Master? Ps 119; John 5:1-47; 2Tim 3:10-17
  - a) To the "apostles" (Rom 1:1,5), literally "those sent out" and "prophets" (Rom 1:2), those who speak for God.
  - b) In other words, "the holy Scriptures." (Rom 1:2)
    - i) When the New Testament speaks of the "Scriptures" and the "prophets" it usually refers to the Old Testament.
    - ii) The Apostles, and their closest servants, wrote the New Testament.
    - iii) Together (OT + NT) make the written word of God, the Holy Bible.
  - c) As Christians we proclaim and confess that God has revealed His will and purpose with clarity, and this is found only in the 66 books of the Bible!
- 5) But what, or more accurately who, is the biblical message about?
  - a) *"Through His prophets in the holy Scriptures, concerning His Son."* (Rom 1:2-3)
  - b) Christ Himself affirmed that all of the written Word of God is about Him!
    - i) *"You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me;"* – **John 5:39**
    - ii) Hear the Theology of Glory vs. the Theology of the Cross in John 5:39.
    - iii) This statement is insanity if Jesus was only a mere mortal, instead of being who the Bible teaches He is: Fully God, fully man and without sin.
      - Jesus is God's eternal "Son." (Rom 1:3)
      - Born a man *"according to the flesh."* (Rom 1:3)
      - Of the *"seed of David,"* thus the true King and Messiah. (Rom 1:3)
- 6) We know this because the Scriptures teach that Christ . . .
  - a) Is the fulfillment of OT prophecy.
  - b) His history, as taught in the Bible: *"declare"* that He is *"the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead."* (Rom 1:4)
  - c) All *"according to the Spirit of holiness"* which refers to the Holy Spirit and/or Christ's life of perfect holiness.
  - d) Therefore Jesus Christ is *"our Lord."* (Rom 1:4)
- 7) But what is the purpose of Christ and His lordship?
  - a) Back to **Rom 1:1** – *"the Gospel of God . . . which He promised beforehand . . . concerning His Son."* (Rom 1:1-3)
  - b) Thus Paul, the other Apostles, and all Christians have received grace; God's unmerited favor because of Christ and His cross. (Rom 1:5) Acts 15:11; Eph 2:8-9
  - c) It is true the Apostle Paul had a special calling: *"to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles."* (Rom 1:5) Gal 1:16
  - d) And the apostolic church is tasked with making disciples of all nations. Matt 28:19
- 8) But what is Paul's focus for the church in these introductory verses of this great Epistle?
  - i) That we are *"called of Jesus Christ,"* (Rom 1:6) which means we are *"beloved of God"* and *"saints"* (literally "holy ones," not by our actions, but by the work of Christ)
  - ii) Thus have *"grace"* and *"peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."* (Rom 1:7)
- 9) Are there things in particular Paul wanted the church in Rome (and us) to do?
  - a) Yes, but that is not until chapter 12!
  - b) Let us read chapters 1-11 first, which is about God's sovereign Gospel, and lay the correct, biblical foundation, and now our purpose, which is the Theology of the Cross.