

Romans 1 (Part 1): 1-7 - Obedience Through Faith

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We are going to start the Book of Romans today. Open your Bible there to Romans chapter 1. Can you guys imagine what it would be like to hear about Jesus from someone by word of mouth and to embrace what you heard? To accept Jesus as your Savior, to believe that He was the promised Messiah who came to die for the sins of the world; to embrace that, to accept that, and then to have no Bible with which to learn and grow?

I mean, they had the Old Testament. But remember something about the Old Testament to the Gentiles living in Rome. Those were Hebrew Scriptures. Those were the Scriptures God had spoken to the Hebrew nation. And although they apply to us most certainly, and they give us a lot of insight concerning the coming of Messiah. And there's great and wonderful prophecies in the Old Testament that are yet to be fulfilled. I mean, there's nothing old and done about the Old Testament.

But from the standpoint of just understanding the Church and who we are as a Christian Church. Do you know that the Church doesn't appear in the Old Testament? There's nothing about the Church in the Old Testament. It is silent. It is invisible.

And so here were these believers in Rome, and they had come to Christ. They'd never met Paul. Paul had not been there up to this point. We think he was probably in Corinth at the time that he wrote this letter and these people had come to the Lord, but they had really nothing to go on in the sense of understanding, really, the depth of their salvation and what it was to be a Christian and to walk with Christ and stuff like that.

And so Paul wrote this letter to give them understanding. I mean, you are all—you either all have a Bible on your lap or in your hand, whether in written or electronic form. And we just take it so for granted. In fact, those of you that have an electronic version of the Bible, you can sit and just go through several translations of the Bible with a flick of your finger. And it's... and we take it so for granted. Can you imagine not having it? At all. No Bible. No Book.

Again, you've got the Old Testament. You can talk about the prophecies that led up to the coming of Messiah, but the teachings of Jesus— you don't have those. You don't have those gospel accounts. You got some people coming through and telling you stories. Right? But understanding the depth of your salvation; you don't have that. What it means to be the Church; you don't have that.

Paul sits down thinking about these people in Rome and he says, I'm going to write these guys a letter, and I'm going to tell them all the stuff they need to know.

And so the Book of Romans is really divided into two main sections. Let me put them up on the screen just so you can see them together.

- **Chapters 1-11: What we believe**
- **Chapters 12-16: How we should live**

Chapters 1 through 11 are essentially what we believe, and it talks a lot about just that: What it is to be a Christian, what we believe as Christians. And then the last part of the book from chapters 12 to 16 are how we should then walk out what we believe and how we should live as Christians.

And so the first— I'll tell you here that the first 11 chapters of Romans are absolutely masterful from the standpoint of the detailed, systematic approach that Paul gave to Christianity. I mean, it is absolutely amazing. And he went into great detail, and we're going to do our best to break it down and make it understandable over the course of however long it takes. We may have to finish this in Heaven, but that's alright.

But we're going to take our time because there's so much here. In fact, if you've read through the book of Romans recently, it just went... That's hard. I mean, it's deep sometimes. I always like to say, you have to put your hip waders on to get into this book and move through it.

We're going to take our time. We're going to break it down. I want to promise you something. If you stick with this study, and I mean from beginning to end, and I know that there's times you're going to miss a Sunday or whatever, but we put everything online. You can catch up on whatever you've missed.

If you will stick with this study through the Book of Romans, you will come away from it with a greater understanding of God, a greater understanding of the salvation that He has offered you, and you will have a greater understanding

of the expectations that God has upon your life as a Believer living out and walking out your life in Christ.

Now, there are within the context of these two sections, about five primary themes that the apostle Paul will bring to light in the course of this study. And they are essentially these:

Major Themes of Romans

- Sin
- Salvation
- Sanctification
- Sovereignty
- Service

He is going to deal with Sin. He is going to deal with Salvation. He is going to deal with Sanctification. He is going to deal with God's Sovereignty and go into great detail on that. And he's going to talk about our Service. Nice of him to put those in all S's.

But when we get done with our study, and in fact, he's going to come out here, swinging in chapter 1. We unfortunately won't get to it today but, by the time we get through chapter 1, you are going to know and understand the topic of sin as it relates to the wrath of God that is being poured out upon this world and will be poured out in a final sort of a way during the tribulation period. You'll understand that. You'll have a greater understanding of that as we go through this particular book.

And then we'll talk about salvation. I mean, we're going to really get into and break down the issues of understanding your salvation. I mean, if there's questions that you have related to God's plan to save you from your sin, we're going to deal with those. We're going to answer those in the course of this study.

Sanctification is that process by which you are being made into the image of Christ, in an increasing way. And those of you who are married, it's happening mostly through the person you're married with. I say that as a joke, but it's true.

I mean, people will say to me from time to time. Oh, pastor Paul, this marriage I got into, I can see God using this for my sanctification. I'm like, you're darn tooting. Yeah, you live with somebody in very close proximity and you're going to push each other's buttons big time. And sometimes when we think that we

should get away from all that, we come to realize that what God is doing in our lives, is He is bringing sanctification.

Sometimes He does it through the people we deal with on a— obviously there's many ways that God can use to sanctify us; to work off those rough edges and bring us more into the image of His Son Jesus Christ, but I share about marriage just because it's just one of those things. I think Sue is just about at that holiness level right now because of being married to me.

We will deal with God's sovereignty in great detail and we will come away with a deeper and more passionate appreciation that God is sovereign. Boy, let me tell you something— sovereignty. When you get ahold of God's sovereignty it'll set you free, in a very cool sort of a way.

And then Paul will emphasize that whole issue of service, and you and I living. And boy, when we get to chapter 12..., oh, I can't wait; almost makes me want to go quickly, but I won't.

By the way, last time I taught through the book of Romans was 2003. Who was here in 2003? See, some of you have already come around full circle. You've gotten the whole Bible since then. There you go. It takes us roughly 10 years to get through the Bible, but it's been a few extra here because I think I'm getting slower as I get older.

But anyway this is one of the most systematic presentations of the Christian faith. So, let's get into it here. We're going to read the first seven verses and then we'll pray.

Romans chapter 1 verse 1, *“Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, ² which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, ³ concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh ⁴ 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, ⁵ 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, ⁶ including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ,*

⁷ 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.”
(ESV)

Stop there, please. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, open our hearts to the ministry of Your Word. Teach us, Lord God. I'm just so thankful that You have not only moved upon Paul's heart and inspired him to write this amazing letter, but You have bent over backwards to preserve it for us these many years so that we can have it and we can see what Paul wrote and we can dig into it and we can break it down and we can understand with the power of Your Holy Spirit.

And furthermore, we pray today that You would help us to apply what we learn. Because therein is wisdom and strength. Father, just do this work in us, we pray. In Jesus' Name, amen.

Since Paul is writing to a group of people whom he had never met, he's not only going to share with them, in clarity, the gospel, but he wants them to know a little something about himself.

He begins... Now, in ancient letters of that day, they began the letter with their name. We do the exact opposite. We say, dear so and so, at the beginning of the letter and then we sign it at the very end. But that wasn't practical back in those days because their letters were often delivered in scrolls.

And so you would have to unroll the scroll all the way to the end, see who wrote the letter, and then roll it back up again and begin reading. It wasn't very practical. So because they were in scroll form, they would start off with the writer of the letter. He begins by saying Paul. But he didn't— and that's frankly all he really has to say in order for them to know who wrote the letter.

But he wants them to know more about him. And so he begins to use some rather descriptive phrases to talk about himself. And he begins this way. He wants this known. He says, *“Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus.”*

Now, you may have a different word other than servant if you have a different translation than the one I'm reading. By the way, I am reading here from the ESV, which is the English Standard Version. You may have an NIV, New International Version Bible, or a New King James (NKJV), or a New American Standard (NASB) Bible. Maybe you even have the old King James (KJV) on your lap.

But even though you may have a different translated word, the Greek word is the same and it's the Greek word, *doulos*, and it is a word that we translate servant. Or your Bible may say, bond servant, but that really doesn't do a whole

lot for you and I because we don't really understand the depth of what this word means. A *doulos*, or a bond servant, was an individual who had willingly chosen to be a lifelong servant-slave of their master.

Here's how that all came about. Under the Law of Moses, if you had a Hebrew slave and, by the way, when I say that word, slave, be careful not to allow all kinds of negative connotations to rise up in your mind as if to paint the picture of slavery here in the United States some 150 years ago.

It really wasn't the picture of slavery that was going on in Israel. Many times servant slaves were in that position because of debts they've gotten themselves into, and they were a servant-slave to work off that debt and so forth. But the Law, meaning the Law of Moses, had a section which protected servant-slaves of Hebrew origin by saying that that individual could only serve you for a period of 6 years.

In the seventh year, they had to be released from their bondage. Okay? That was mandatory. What if a servant wanted to stay with their master? Well, God put a contingency in the Law for that as well. And if a servant said, I love my master. My master is so good to me, takes care of me, is respectful and honorable and so on and so forth. They could go to their master and they could say, I want to serve you for the rest of my life.

And then to signify that they had made that decision, the master would take that servant-slave to the city gate where they would pierce their ear with an awl and it would signify to all who saw this individual that they had made the decision of their own free will to be a lifelong servant-slave to their master, a *doulos*.

Paul begins this letter by saying, "*Paul, a... (doulos) of Christ Jesus,...*" And what he is saying to them is, I am His; body, soul, and spirit for the rest of my life by my own willing choice. I am His. And that's the first thing Paul wants them to know about him.

Sometimes when you and I are introducing ourselves to people— and keep in mind, Paul is about to give them a teaching letter; and to teach someone puts you, almost in a position of authority. And it's a very natural thing in our human self to advance our authority. To say, to get up and say, (Pastor Paul uses an arrogant voice) I'm here and I'm going to teach you and I'm qualified to do so....

And that's one of the reasons we love to tack all these things at the end of our name like Ph.D. And then put Dr. on the front and all these other things on the

end so that people understand that, in essence, I'm qualified. I'm good to go on this thing and you should be listening to me.

Isn't it interesting how Paul takes a completely different approach? He starts off with this teaching letter, and I mean a teaching letter to beat all teaching letters—and he says, Paul, a *doulos*, a lifelong servant-slave of Jesus Christ. I love Him, and I've given my life to Him. And the rest of my life will be lived serving Him with all my heart. That's what he wants to know— that's what he wants them to know. That's the first thing that he wants them to know.

He goes on. Secondly, he wants it understood that, if you keep reading with me, that he was called to be an apostle. Now, this is where he does advance some aspect of authority, because Apostle is a title that means, one sent forth with authority. All right.

And Paul wants them to know that this servant-slave of Jesus has not been given— or to clarify he has not taken on some authority on his own. In other words, I didn't pick this. I didn't choose this position to be this teacher. I am an Apostle. That means I was sent forth. I was called by God to do this work that I'm currently doing. That's a very important thing.

Paul wants his audience to know I didn't pick this job. God picked me. And that's not to brag in any sort of a way. I want you to know that I didn't advance myself. This is something God called me to do.

Thirdly, Paul declared himself to be “*set apart for the gospel of God.*” Notice that. Now, the words, “*set apart*” have the connotation of a boundary or a fence line. Many of you have a fence around your property. And that is basically the essence of what this means. It means to have a boundary.

We call it zoning in a larger sense. Communities have zoning laws. And that means that if an area of land is zoned commercial, then what can be built on that is retail commercial type stuff. Right? And if it's zoned residential, then that's where you're going to build homes. And what that means is it's set apart, it's set apart for that purpose.

Paul is saying in this section that not only am I a servant-slave of Jesus Christ for life, not only was I called by Him, and I didn't pick this myself, but my life is literally zoned for God. It's zoned for Him. My purpose in life is to serve Him. That is what I have been called to do.

It's a good thing. It's a good thing to have a purpose. Isn't it? It's a stinky thing to not have any purpose in life. I mean, people who don't have a purpose, who don't understand their purpose, or who are living their life in the world— given, what I mean by that is that— taking upon themselves the purpose of the world to live. That's a pretty miserable way to live. Paul is basically saying here that I have a purpose. My life has been zoned by God.

If somebody gave you a piece of paper and a pencil and said, I want you to write down for me please, your purpose in life. Why are you here? Why are you taking up space and oxygen? What's your purpose? What would you say? What would you write?

Now, people in the world, they pretty much have an answer for that. You can read about it in all their books and magazines and see it in their movies and television shows. It's to be happy, isn't it? You hear it over and over and over again: to be happy, to make themselves happy. Wow, what a miserable purpose...

But you and I have a purpose that goes far beyond that. I thought about that myself. I thought, what would I say? I mean, if somebody just confronted me and said, What's your purpose? I mean, you'd probably be taken aback, right, if somebody actually asked the question, because it sounds like, Why are you here taking up space?

But I think I'd probably come back and I'd say, well, my first purpose is to be a servant of the Lord my God. And then I have other purposes like to be a faithful husband and a good father, a pastor and teacher and so forth.

But what is your purpose? All of us have a purpose for being here. If you're not sure what it is, let me just give you that quick clue again: it's going to be the opposite of what the world says. The world is going to say that your purpose for being here is all about you.

And in the context of God's economy, our purpose for being here is all about Him. It's Godward (Pastor points upward) and outward. Do you know what's interesting about living your life Godward and outward? First of all, it goes against nature. And I mean by nature, I mean what's going on inside my own heart and life. I don't naturally like to live for God. I just want you to know that right here and now because it makes me really feel good to say it.

Because I don't want anybody to think that I'm better than you or that living the Christian life comes easy to me because it does not. It comes very, very

difficult. My natural tendency is to live for myself. I am a very selfish person. In fact, I'm the most selfish person I know. And I have to battle with those tendencies on a daily basis.

But I have to remind myself that my purpose here in life is not to live for myself; to please myself. It's to live for God and to please Him, to be pleasing to Him; to serve Him with all my heart. What's interesting about that is that when we serve the Lord, when we serve Him with all of our hearts, that's when we actually get happy.

That's when joy enters our lives. That's when peace and satisfaction begins to be something that's really, truly attainable. Otherwise, we're just miserable. We're out there grabbing for all the things that we want, but we're miserable because we're not getting any of them. Or if we are getting them, they're just not satisfying us in any sort of a lasting way.

Paul goes on, verse 2. He's talking about the gospel here. He says, concerning the Gospel, *“which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures,³ concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh⁴ 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,”*

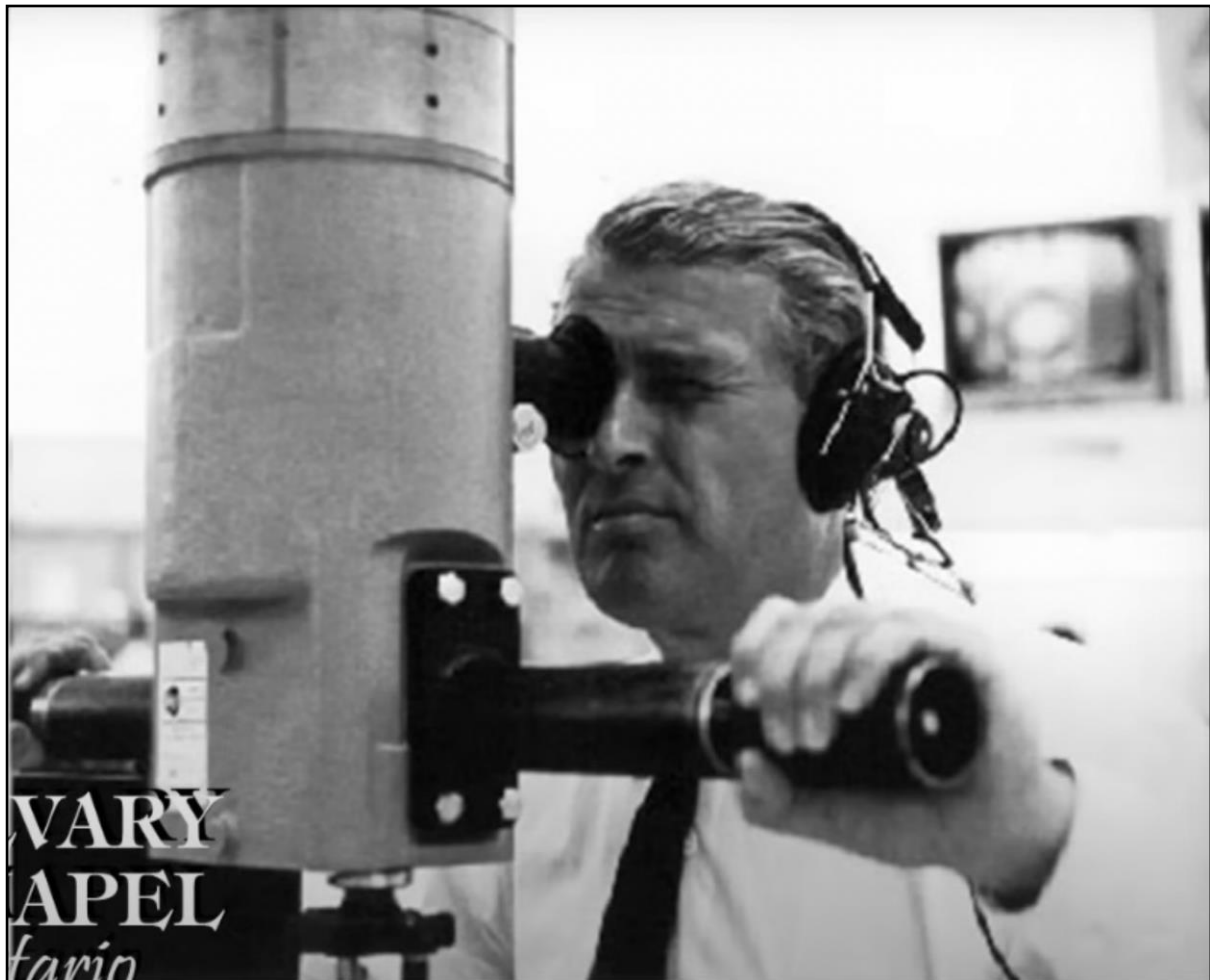
I want you to notice something that's very cool here in verse 3. He says, *“concerning his Son.”* One of the things I love about getting into words— I love words, by the way. Words are cool. Don't you agree? I mean, I never liked English when I was going to school. In fact, I didn't like going to school, which was a little embarrassing because my dad was the principal, and then later on the superintendent, but I didn't care much for school. But boy, I tell you, once I got out of school, I started really learning. I just was a late bloomer.

But I love words, and I love how words give us insight into things even from the Bible. This word that is translated, concerning here in this verse is a simple Greek word that— it takes up 4 letters, and they're translated P-E-R-I, peri. Okay?

Now, if you take that same prefix and you— and think of some words in our English language, it actually gives you insight into what he's saying here when he says this gospel *“concerning his Son.”* And here's one of the words: periscope. You guys remember periscope?

Some of you who are as old as me— or older, you remember seeing some of those old, war movies and stuff where submarines were involved. You don't

hear much about submarines much anymore. But they had this device on them called a periscope.



Here's a picture on the screen so you can remember what they looked like. Now, what was significant about a periscope wasn't necessarily that they looked through it, but because it gave them the ability to look 360 degrees.

They could literally turn all the way around and see all the way, 360 degrees, around their vessel, which is submerged at the time. Periscope. The reason we call it a periscope is P-E-R-I means, around, or if you will, to encompass.

Now, think about that— about this, concerning this verse that we're looking at here, *which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures*. Verse 3, “*concerning (or surrounding or encircling) his Son, Jesus Christ.*”

Okay, what is he— what is Paul saying? He's saying the gospel is all about Jesus Christ. He encircles the gospel. He envelops the Gospel, 360 degrees. It's all

about Him. You see? Now that's an interesting sort of an idea, because often what happens when you and I start talking to people about the Bible, eternal life, or we get into a conversation just about God's talk, have you noticed how quickly the conversation moves to religion?

People start talking about religion. And can I just tell you something? Religion never saved anybody. In fact, religion will only drag you down. What we need to remember when we're talking to people is let's keep it on topic. And the topic is Jesus. It's all about Jesus. People who don't want to hear anything at all about what you believe will actually talk to you about Jesus.

Because much of what they hate and much of what people reject doesn't have anything to do with Jesus. It has to do with religion. And they'll bring up all kinds of things from the past. And (Pastor Paul grumbles) you Christians, throughout the years you've been....

And they'll bring up the Crusades, and they'll bring up all these other things from history as if to throw rotten tomatoes your direction and say: I'm not going to allow you to talk about this because I don't want to hear about it. Well, you know what? I just— when I'm talking to people, I just concede to it all. I just go, Yeah, that's really a drag. Guilty. Yeah.

Let's talk about Jesus. Just let's just put that all aside for a minute and let's just talk about the Person of Jesus Christ. Let's talk about what He taught. Let's talk about what the Bible says actually about Him. Let's talk about what He did on the cross. Let's talk about the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Let's talk about those things.

It's interesting, then you start to get into some real conversations with people. But when we— instead when we try to talk about all this religious stuff, it's just, it's like— you just get bogged down, don't you?

And the reason is because it's not about that stuff. It's not about that stuff. It's not about religion. It's about Jesus. It's about the Person of Jesus Christ. Keep it there. Keep it on topic. What do you think of Jesus?

I remember years ago, a Christian artist who most of you would have probably never heard of, because he's old. But he was one of the original Jesus Music pioneers, I guess you'd call him; guy by the name of Barry McGuire. Back in the early 60s he actually had a secular hit. Some of you oldsters remember— it's called the, Eve of Destruction.

I actually got a chance to interview Barry McGuire once on the radio. Neat guy. But he tells... his personal testimony actually talks about how he found a Bible. And it was called Good News for Modern Man, and he didn't know it was a Bible. So he started reading it and he started realizing, (Pastor Paul uses a grumbling voice) oh, it's the Bible. He's like, oh, these Christians are disguising the Bible now. He threw it across the room.

But later on, he just decided You know what? I'm just going to read this book and just see what it says. I'm going to forget about all the religion that I've looked at and disliked. And I'm just going to see if there's anything to this Jesus guy. He ended up coming to the Lord, giving his life to the Lord when he met the Person, when he experienced the Person of Jesus Christ. Why is that? Well, it was because the whole gospel encircles Him. It surrounds Him. Periscope. 360 degrees.

Concerning Jesus, Paul goes on to say, verse 5, *“through whom...”* He's talking about Jesus now, *“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.”*

I want you to notice something, and this is something either underline, or in your mind underline it, but it's those words, *“the obedience of faith.”* Those are really interesting words. He says we've been called. We've, in fact, we've been given *“grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith.”*

Now, if you have an NIV, your Bible says *the “obedience through faith.”* It's a different preposition, but it's basically the same idea. Obedience that comes from faith. Does that sound like a strange idea to you? Because it should. It should sound like a very weird idea. Obedience that comes from faith; obedience that is actually predicated on faith.

You see, we don't deal with that on a regular basis. We deal with obedience based on other things. Every parent here in this room who has been a parent in the past or presently, you understand the obedience that comes from instruction. In fact, as parents, there's a point in time when we're raising our kids, when we come to terms with this verse that says, train up a child in the way that they are to go and then when they're old, they won't depart from it. (Proverbs 22:6)

Well, we learn that and we understand that obedience is predicated upon training. We understand that. And that's cool. And so we begin to hopefully train up our children in the way that they are to go; obedience based on instruction. But that's not what Paul's talking about here, is he?

Well, then what else is there? Well, then there's obedience that comes from rules. We deal with that all the time in our culture. I mean, our culture's based on rules and laws. When you're driving on the road, there's a posted speed limit, or on the highway; says you can go this fast, and if you go any faster, you run the risk of getting caught and getting punished for it— paying a fine, or whatever the case might be. You break the law, there's going to be consequences that go along with that. What is that? That's obedience predicated upon rules keeping.

It's really the same thing that the Jews went through as it relates to the Law, right? They were to obey the Mosaic Law. Right? And it was obedience based on the rules and regulations of the Law. We understand that, too. But that's not what Paul's talking about here.

And then there's obedience that comes through fear and intimidation. You know, I was thinking about the last time I taught through the Book of Romans, which was 2003. Do you guys remember what was going on in 2003?

We were just at that time learning a lot about the regime of Saddam Hussein. Yeah, seems like— it doesn't seem that long ago to me. I mean, I'm surprised to actually find out that, and we weren't really surprised by what we learned, but we were horrified... when we found out that he ruled by intimidation and fear.

And, that's the way dictators do it. Hitler, Mussolini, all of them, they ruled with an iron fist. Why do you obey your leader? Because I'm afraid of him. You know? Fear and intimidation; we understand obedience through fear and intimidation, but that's not what Paul's talking about here.

What is he saying? He is saying that there is an obedience that comes by virtue of faith. In other words, an *obedience through our faith*. Let me ask you a quick question. Do you recognize in your life a difficulty to obey God? I mean, do you recognize— I sure hope I'm not the only one. But if you don't, I'll just tell you right now, I do.

I recognize in my heart a bent, or a gravitational pull away from obedience to God. I recognize it in me and I think the Apostle Paul did, too. In fact, he wrote about it. He said, in my members, I see this law that is pulling me away from God. (Romans 7:15-19)

And it happens as Christians; we come to Christ. We accept His salvation that He made available for us on the cross. And then we start walking out that life in Him and we realize, you know what? I'm a mess up. I'm a walking mess up.

And I— and disobedience is almost around every corner. How am I going to begin to obey?

Ask Christians; ask yourself. First of all, let me ask this. How are you saved? Well, most people would probably get that one right? They'd say. I'm saved by grace through faith. In other words, by putting my faith in what Jesus did on the cross I am saved, my sins are forgiven. Wonderful. Great answer.

Now, how do you obey God? See, you know what we end up doing there? We end up applying some of these other areas. Well, I think we need to be instructed in God's Word. Well, there's an element of that, but that's, again, that's obedience by instruction. That's not what Paul's talking about here. He's talking about "*obedience through faith.*"

How is that even possible? See, this is the thing that Christians, so many Christians mess up on. And that's why they don't live a victorious life or an obedient life. They get saved based on faith. They believe that Jesus died for them on the cross. But when it comes to obedience and living their life to please God day by day, they miss the point that that also comes by faith.

And they try to do it by rules or by instruction, and they even try to intimidate themselves. Sometimes we'll even intimidate ourselves. And we start making all kinds of promises to God. We mess up and then we go, God, I'm so sorry; I'm never going to do that again, I promise. I promise I'm never going to do that again.

And then we mess up again, don't we? And then we come back to God and we go, God, me again... And we get mad at ourselves, don't we? And we're angry at our sin and we're like, and we're like, I'm not going to do that again. And we try to assert the strength of character. It's going to, I'm going to obey God at all costs.

That's not the obedience Paul's talking about. That's basically taking the flesh and trying to defeat the flesh. That doesn't work. Paul says that we have been given grace to come to you and talk to you about an obedience that is based on faith.

Faith in what? See, we understand faith in our salvation. We understand what we're putting our— we did communion this morning, right? What are we putting our faith in? We're putting our faith in what Jesus did on the cross. We had it signified or given to us in these symbols of the bread and the cup. That's easy. We can say, Yeah, I'm putting my faith in what Jesus did on the cross. He bore

my sin in His body. He poured out His blood unto death. I'm putting my faith in that. And I believe that by my faith, I am forgiven of my sins and I'm born again. Wonderful.

Now, if I talk about faith and obedience through faith, what's your faith in? I don't know, we might say. Well, this is a little bit of a preview of coming attractions because later on in the Book of Romans, Paul's going to talk about this. He's going to talk about why we can have victory in our lives over the flesh through faith.

Let me put the scripture from Romans chapter six up on the screen for you. It goes like this,

Romans 6:11-12 (ESV)

So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions.

So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. (he, says, what's the result of that? Well, you're not going to) Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, (anymore) to make you obey its passions.

Why? Because you are considering yourself dead to sin. Let me show you how this appears in the NIV, because, slightly different word that's used here. He says, in the NIV, it's rendered this way,

Romans 6:11-12 (NIV84)

In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires.

In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin. That word can also be reckon, or get this, believe. You are to believe.

Christians, listen, this is very important. You and I are to believe that when we came to Jesus, we actually joined with Him in His death and that there are benefits to that death. And the benefit is we have been set free from the power of the sinful nature to control our lives. And we've been raised to a new life of obedience to God. Right?

What does Paul say? “*Count yourselves dead to sin.*” Reckon yourselves dead. Believe it. Believe that when you came to Jesus, the sinful nature was rendered powerless to control you.

Now, here's the problem. Here's the problem. We overthink the thing. We go, wait a minute. There's a problem here. I keep sinning. You're telling me you want me to believe that I've been set free from sin, but I keep sinning. What's up with that?

Listen, you have been set free. I've been set free from the power and the tyranny of the sinful nature. The Bible says, him “*whom the Son sets free is...*” what? (Congregant answers, free indeed!) That's right, truly free indeed. (John 8:36) So you've been set free. You've been set free from the power of the flesh.

Why do you keep going back and doing it? Because you want to! Same thing with me. We choose to, I don't have to go back and sin; neither do you. We choose to or it's habitual. Some of us have real deep ruts in our life of habitual responses to life. And it's, yeah it's sin. And we've been doing it for so long...

Especially some of you guys who've been living in the world for years and years and years and then you came to Jesus. You got some deep ruts and you need God's grace and power and strength. But it's through faith...

You know what? When I accepted Jesus on the cross, something happened. Something happened. Yeah, I was forgiven of my sins. Sure, I was born again. Absolutely. But something else happened; I was set free from the tyranny of the sinful nature to control me. And now, I have the freedom to either go there or not— and this is the tough part about it.

People really struggle with this part of it, but you know what? You are now free to sin if you want to. Before you weren't. You just sinned because you were a slave to sin. Now you're no longer a slave to sin. But you can still sin. You're free to go back and wallow in the pig pen if you want to. Sorry to put it so graphically, but that's about the way it is. Right?

Or you're free to be obedient to God. You're free. Him whom the Son sets free is free. And you're either all the way free or you're not free at all. So this is a wonderful truth from God's Word and we're going to get into it more when we get into Romans chapter 6, I promise.

But for right now, for today, I want you to know that obedience— the kind of obedience that we're called to live is not an obedience that's based on instruction

or rule keeping. Some of you guys were raised in churches where it was all about rules. You just kept the rules. Some of you were even Sabbatharians, meaning that you were raised in a church where you had to go to church on Saturday.

That was a rule that you kept in order to be acceptable to God. And then you realize, wait a minute, that's not the way we're supposed to obey God. It's not through rule keeping. It's not through instruction. It's not through intimidation, even if it's self-intimidation. It's "*obedience by faith.*"

I am to believe that I have been set free through the blood of Jesus Christ and that the sinful nature no longer controls me to tyrannize my life and to say, You must. And now I can say, I don't have to.

Sometimes I still choose to and that's where I come to Him and I say, Father, forgive me. Forgive me as I forgive those who have sinned against me. Am I getting saved all over again? No, of course not. But the point is, we do mess up. None of us are perfect. But for the first time in our lives, we have the freedom to live our lives to the glory of God.

Paul says, so from now on, why don't you just reckon yourself dead? Dead to what? Dead to sin. Why don't you just think of yourself that way? Think of yourself as dead to sin and alive to Christ.

And you know what? The reality of that begins to follow, faith, when we believe it. When you believe that you're really set free from sin, you begin to walk in a greater expression of freedom from sin.