

Romans 1:5-6

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/rom/rom-1/romans-15-6/>

Paul is an apostle who was called by God to bring the gospel to the Gentiles. The Romans to whom he is writing are Gentile believers in Jesus.

Following his assertion that Jesus was raised from the dead “according to the Spirit of holiness,” who is also “Jesus Christ our Lord”, now Paul asserts that *through whom* (the Spirit) *we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for His name’s sake* (vs 5).

Through the power of the Spirit, the Apostle Paul has *received* the ministry of *grace* (v 5). Paul considered himself to be the chief of sinners because he persecuted the church (1 Timothy 1:12–16). Paul watched and approved of the stoning of Stephen, the first church martyr who died for his testimony of Jesus. Paul guarded the coats of the stoners, so he was an accomplice to Stephen’s murder (Acts 7:57–8:1).

But God turned Paul’s disobedience into a passion for *grace*. It was through grace that God accepted and forgave Paul, even though he had done horrible things. This is the same grace Paul passionately taught. In fact, it is Paul’s teaching of grace that caused the competing Jewish authorities to slander Paul’s teaching of God’s good news (Romans 3:8).

In addition to having *received grace*, the power of the Spirit also appointed Paul to *apostleship*. To be an apostle of Jesus one had to have been with Jesus in person, seen Jesus in His resurrected form, and been appointed by Jesus or the Holy Spirit.

The book of Acts was written by Luke, a traveling companion of Paul, in part to document Paul’s conversion and appointment to the office of apostle. It is important that Paul establish this authority as an apostle because this letter is written to answer slanderous charges against Paul’s authority and teaching. However, even though Paul has authority as an apostle, in this letter he goes beyond assertions and answers allegations. Paul invites people to embrace what is true. In doing so, Paul practices the grace he received.

The result of the empowerment by the Spirit in Paul, both *of grace and of apostleship*, was to *bring about the obedience of faith among the Gentiles (non-Jews) for His name’s sake* (v 5). This was Paul’s special commission from God, to be the “Apostle to the *Gentiles*” (Romans 11:13). Since Rome was the center of the Gentile world in every respect, defending his teaching against slander in Rome is vital to accomplishing the mission the Holy Spirit appointed Paul to pursue.

The phrase *obedience of faith among the Gentiles* anticipates the theme verses of Romans 1:16–17, that the way to a righteous or just life is through faith, not through law. Romans 1:16–17 states:

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘But the righteous man shall live by faith.’”

The Apostle Paul is writing to the *Gentile* believers in Rome who *also are the called of Jesus Christ* (v 6). This is the only letter Paul wrote to people he did not already have an in-person connection with. Paul had a hand in founding the other churches he wrote to, and spent time (in person) establishing each church.

Paul wrote letters to the churches in the cities (or areas) of Corinth, Galatia, Ephesus, Philippi, Colossae, and Thessalonica. These were Greek cities (or regions, in the case of Galatia). All except Colossae, Ephesus, and Galatia were physically located in the area of modern-day Greece and Macedonia. Colossae and Ephesus were cities in modern-day Turkey that had been colonized by the Greeks, and Galatia was a region they had colonized.

Unlike Paul's letter to the Romans, the rest of his letters were written to encourage, teach, and exhort people who already personally knew him. In the case of Romans, Paul is likely coming to the aid of Priscilla and Aquila, who were Jewish leaders among the Gentile believers in Rome. They apparently led a church that met at their home (Romans 16:3-5).

Priscilla and Aquila were from Rome, and met Paul when they fled persecution. They then had ministered with Paul on his missionary journeys (Acts 18:2). Priscilla and Aquila were leaders in evangelizing and teaching the church at Ephesus (Acts 18:26). We can infer from this that Paul's letter was primarily intended to help the ministry of his disciples, Priscilla and Aquila, in furthering the gospel in Rome.

While Paul likely wrote this letter in support of the ministry of Priscilla and Aquila to the Roman Gentiles, Paul also wrote letters addressed directly to individuals that are included as a part of the New Testament. He wrote to leaders like Priscilla and Aquila who helped him in his church-planting work.

Some of the recipients of his letters included Titus, whom Paul left in Crete to appoint leaders, and Timothy, one of his primary disciples. Despite not knowing the Roman saints personally, Paul must have relied on reports from Priscilla and Aquila, and knew their faith was real. We can infer that Phoebe brought reports to Paul then delivered his letter to Rome (Romans 16:1-2).

Paul likely wrote the letter to support the work of his fellow-laborers in the gospel. But probably he also knew that if the slander against his teaching was accepted by these renowned believers in Rome, it could have a negative impact on his appointed apostolic ministry. Rome was the center of influence in the world at that time.

It is interesting to consider that the persecution that drove Priscilla and Aquila out of Rome resulted in them becoming disciples and co-laborers with Paul. Further, that Paul's difficulty in having to answer slander charges against his ministry resulted in this incredible letter, an unforeseen benefit to believers past and present. Although the allegations against Paul seem severe, we can infer that Priscilla and Aquila came out on top in the controversy, given that this letter to the Romans survived and made it into the New Testament. As Paul was called to apostleship, the believers in Rome are *the called of Jesus Christ*. Called to faith in Him, and to walk in faith with Him (Romans 1:16-17).

Biblical Text

5 through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for His name's sake,6 among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ;