

PAUL, GOD, AND THE GOSPEL (PART 4)
ROMANS 1:7

A couple of years ago, [*Business Insider*](#) reported the following story:

In 1962, a man named George Walton wanted to find out what his 1913 Liberty Head nickel coin was worth. But on his way to the coin show, his car crashed and burst into flames, killing him – while the coin emerged unscathed. Appraisers gave it to his sister, Melva Givens, but told her it was fake.

For some reason, though, Givens kept it, passing it down to her heirs in a padded envelop with the words “It’s not real” scrawled on it after she died in 1992.

In 2003, her heirs wanted to validate Givens’ claim and had it reappraised.

As it turns out, the coin is authentic – and one of only five 1913 Liberty Head nickels ever made. The U.S. officially stopped making Liberty Head nickels in 1912, but one rebellious worker at the U.S. Mint made five more in 1913 to create collectors’ items and sold them for \$500 each.

At an auction in Schaumburg, Illinois, last week, the heirs were shocked when their coin sold for \$3,172,500. They couldn’t believe Givens had kept it in a closet for 40 years, thinking the whole time it was a fake. “She died ... never knowing she had the real thing,” one of the four heirs, Cheryl Myers, told the *Chicago Tribune*.

Myers and her brother, Ryan Givens, celebrated their new fortune with dinner and told the AP they plan to invest the money. “We started with a nickel yesterday morning and now we have \$2.7 million.”

This family possessed something of great value that they thought was of insignificant value. And too many believers are like that when they consider the value of the gospel and their salvation.

Many years ago when I was in seminary I was leading an evangelism training team and a good friend of mine was on that team. One evening after we had finished our evening and were driving back to the church, he said something like, “I know and believe the importance of the gospel to forgive us of our sins, but is that all we are telling people? What good is the gospel *now*? What is the benefit of the gospel today?” It was a good question and one that has biblical answers (answers that are found in our verse this morning), but unfortunately I didn’t have a clear answer for him that evening. But I’ve thought often about that question since then and have some definite answers now.

BECAUSE OF THE GOSPEL THE BELIEVER RECEIVES GREAT BLESSINGS FROM GOD.

Last week I said the question undergirding verses 5-6 was “why the gospel?” That is, why should we be committed to the gospel? If “why” was the question last week, then the question in verse 7 is “what” — “what good is the gospel?” That is, what does the gospel do in and for believers?

Paul will expand each of these truths in some way in the rest of the book, but here is his initial, brief answer to the question, “what are the benefits of the gospel in the life of the believer?”

- 1. Because of the Gospel the Believer is LOVED by God**
- 2. Because of the Gospel the Believer is Called a SAINT**
- 3. Because of the Gospel the Believer Receives GRACE and PEACE**
- 4. Because of the Gospel the Believer has FELLOWSHIP with God**

In this verse, Paul offers four benefits of the gospel for the believer —

1. Because of the Gospel the Believer is LOVED by God

- Verses 1-7 are Paul's salutation in one 93-word sentence in the original text.
 - ✓ Paul begins in v. 1 with an introduction of himself to the Roman church — a church he has not visited, though he knows many of the people there from his contacts in Asia Minor.
 - ✓ Then in verses 2-4 Paul explains the basics of the gospel, particularly as it relates to the person and work of Christ. This is particularly interesting since the rest of the book only has limited references to Christ, yet in the opening verses Christ is central to the understanding of the gospel.
 - ✓ And in verses 5-6 Paul explains why the gospel is essential — “why bother with the gospel?”
 - ✓ And now finally in verse 7 Paul expounds some of the benefits of the gospel for the believer.
- The first benefit of the gospel is that the believer is loved by God. Paul says, ***to all who are beloved of God in Rome***. First, let's notice some things that Paul says about this love —
 - ✓ The word ***beloved*** is common in the NT (61x), but this is the only time Paul uses it in his salutations, and this is the only time the phrase ***beloved of God*** appears in the NT. So it seems that Paul is using a unique phrase to make a particular statement.
 - ✓ The way this word is usually used in the NT refers to love of believers for one another (16:5, 8, 9, 12; 1 Jn. 2:7; 3:2, 21; 4:1, 7, 11). We are loved by and have a relationship of love with one another. But here Paul is emphasizing that we are loved by *God* and have a relationship of love with *Him*. And what is of particular significance is that God *voluntarily* initiates this love. God does not love His people because they love Him; He has a love and then initiates fellowship with His people. No man chooses to love God, but God does choose to love sinful man (**5:6-11**). Since we were sinners (in a state of sin/unredemption), we were completely incapable of loving God. We did not love God and we could not love God. And at that time, God loved us and initiated the plan of our redemption and reconciliation to Him. How did/does God love us?
 - Christ died for us (v. 8)
 - God justified us (v. 9a)
 - God saved us from His own wrath (v. 9b)
 - God reconciled us to Him (though we were His enemies, v. 10a)
 - God saves us by the life of Christ (v. 10b)
 - God reconciles us so that we might exult (and be joyful) in Him (v. 11)
 - This is how we are beloved of God. He loved us when we hated Him.

- This week I began listening to an account of a particular company in the invasion in Europe at the end of WWII (*Band of Brothers*). One thing that has been striking is the hatred American troops had for the Germans. There was a ruthlessness and brutality that was unashamed because of the wickedness of the German government. On D-Day they were told, “take no prisoners,” and they didn’t. And later they showed little regret in killing the enemy and even desecrating (at times) and looting the dead bodies. This is what we do to enemies. We kill them unhesitatingly because we know they will do the same to us, if they are given a chance. But while God had a chance to kill all His enemies, He loved us and provided a way for our salvation and redemption from sin while we hated Him and wanted to kill Him. This is a love that is incomprehensible to us.
- ✓ We should also remember that while this word **beloved** is usually explained as “committed love” (and it is) it also is a term of tenderness and intimacy. It is a joyful relationship. God does not “endure” us. He enjoys and delights in us and our fellowship.
- Having seen some characteristics of God’s love, let’s think about some implications of that love —
 - ✓ This love from God is rooted in the work of Christ. The phrase is also a short way of saying, “believer in Christ.” To be a believer is to be loved by God. All believers are loved by God; everyone who is loved with a particular love of God is saved by God from God’s wrath.
 - ✓ But even more than God’s love being rooted in Christ’s work, God’s love for His people is rooted in His own relationship with Christ. This word **beloved** was used often in the gospels to refer to the love of God the Father for the Son (Mt. 3:17; 12:18; 17:5; **Mk. 1:11**; 9:7; 12:6; Lk. 3:22; 20:13). So, the Father has the kind of love for His people that He has for the Son. How can that be? The Father loves the Son and because the believer is identified with Christ and *in* Christ, then the Father loves the believer in Christ with the same kind of love that He has for Christ. And since that is true, that means that God can no more stop loving us than He can stop loving Christ. We are secure in His love for us. So this word **beloved** is a unique and striking way for Paul to affirm the security of the believer in God’s love. Is that really true?

“... there seems to be a parallel betwixt his Father’s delights in him, and his delights in us. ‘I was daily his delight, and my delights were with the sons of men’ (Prov. 8:22, 30, 31). But I say, who can tell, who can tell altogether, what and how much the Father delighted in his Son before the world began? Who can tell what kind of delight the Father had in the Son before the world began? Why there seems to be a parallel betwixt the Father’s love to Christ, and Christ’s love to us; the Father’s delight in Christ, and his delight in us. Yea, Christ confirms it, saying, ‘As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you, continue ye in my love’ (John 15:9).” [John Bunyan, All Loves Excelling, p. 69.]

"We usually find within ourselves reasons why we think God should not love us. Such searching unbiblical. The Bible is quite clear that God does not look within us for a reason to love us. He loves us because we are in Christ Jesus. When He looks at us, He does not look at us as 'stand alone' Christians, resplendent in our own good works, even good works as Christians. Rather, as He looks at us, He sees us united to His beloved Son, clothed in His righteousness. He loves us, not because we are lovely in ourselves, but because we are in Christ." [Jerry Bridges, Trusting God, p. 143.]

- ✓ God cannot hate those who are His and He is no more displeased with us than He is with Christ.
- ✓ How should we respond to this love? We should love one another. It has been noted that when this word **beloved** is used of God's love for sinful men, the love of believers for one another is not far behind. This is what John would particularly emphasize in his first letter (4:1, 7, 11).
- ✓ So we should respond to God's love by loving one another. And we should also respond to this love of God with joyful resting in God. One writer said, "That Christians are loved by God is not a truism but a truth to be received in awe and wonder." [Murray] E.g., meditate on **8:31-39**.

Another benefit of the gospel is that the believer is called a saint —

2. Because of the Gospel the Believer is Called a SAINT

- There are two characteristics to notice in the phrase **called as saints**. First is that what we are as saints is because of our **calling**.
 - ✓ The word **calling** does not refer to a general call or offer of salvation to all men. Paul is using the word here as he did in verse 6 — it refers to the effective call of God to bring unbelievers to salvation. The unbeliever was walking away from God and God called and drew and compelled, and the unbeliever responded by believing in Christ. God has effectively accomplished His saving purposes in the life of the believer (e.g., Rom. 8:28ff — those who God calls *do* come to salvation and cannot lose their salvation).
 - ✓ So when the enemy of God becomes a believer He can be sure He is secure because God has called Him and God has saved Him — it is God's efficacious work.
- The second thing we should note in this phrase is that God has called us as **saints**.
 - ✓ This word does not mean, "super Christian," or "a person of great holiness, virtue, or benevolence." The word means, "set apart," or "holy," or "distinct." It refers to every believer's position in Christ. One writer says it well: "A saint...is a person whose guilt has been blotted out on the basis of Christ's substitutionary atonement, and who, consequently, by

means of the power of the indwelling Spirit, strives to live to God's glory. He is one who has been *set apart* and *consecrated* for service." [Hendriksen]

- ✓ Paul pictures what the essence of holiness is in 2 Tim. 2:20-21 — to be “holy” or a “saint” means that we are set aside to be used for God. When we are saved, God says that we now different kinds of vessels and we are to be used for Him. So God views us as His.
- ✓ But since we are His that also means that what we do is also for Him. We are “holy” by our calling and position, and we are also “holy” by what we do. Or we could say, because God has declared us to be holy (set apart for Him), we live holy lives (we live out the reality that we belong to Him). This is Paul's very point in Eph. 1:4 — God chose us and saved us so that we would live lives that reflect His holiness. So Paul says we are holy both by position and practice. And he will expand this later (e.g., 12:1ff — we are non-conformed to the world, we use our spiritual gifts, we love one another, and we endure and love our enemies).
- Implications:
 - ✓ “...*saints* should live in accordance with the character implied in being thus set apart. At the same time their being saints at all is by virtue of their divine calling, not their own moral achievement.” [Morris, 53.] We are set apart (holy) by God's declaration, not by our deeds.
 - ✓ So just as it is with our being loved by God, so also with our holiness, God sees us with the righteousness of Christ and sees us as holy. We are secure in that; we do not earn and merit God's favor because of our activity for Him. We have His favor because He has effectively called us as saints and positioned us as saints.
 - ✓ And as John has said so well, because we are holy, then we also work live our lives in accordance with that holiness (1 Jn. 3:1-3).

A third benefit of the gospel is that the believer receives grace and peace —

3. Because of the Gospel the Believer Receives GRACE and PEACE

- In ancient letters, the format for the beginning of a letter was A to B, greetings. And it was usually that short. Paul follows the same formula, but it took him 93 words to do that. Verse 1 was his “signature,” verses 2-6 were his declaration of whom he was writing and what he was writing. And now at the end of verse 7 he says, “greetings.” Except he doesn't say “greetings (*chairein*).” He says, “Grace (*charis*) and peace.” So he is using a play on words. He is saying almost the same thing as a secular writer did, but not quite.

- ✓ In one way, this is not remarkable — Paul uses some form of *grace and peace* in all of his letters (11 of 13 letters use virtually this identical wording: 1 Cor. 1:3; 2 Cor. 1:2; Gal. 1:3; Eph. 1:2; Phil. 1:2; Col. 1:2; 1 Th. 1:1; 2 Th. 1:2; Tt. 1:4; Philemon 1:3 and his two letters to Timothy include this greeting in an expanded blessing).
- ✓ But on the other hand, what the believer has been granted by God is particularly unique. The typical secular letter wishes “blessings,” without any certainty that those blessings can be obtained. But Paul reminds the Romans (and other readers) that because they are in Christ, they have already received *grace and peace*.
- ✓ The word *grace* is God’s undeserved favor. We have no right to demand His lovingkindness to us, but that is exactly what He gives us anyway. Some have said that the entire gospel is summed up in this word “grace.” And this word will be important throughout this book —
 - By grace we are justified (3:24)
 - We also continue to live (and stand) by grace (5:2)
 - We receive life by grace and the gift of righteousness (5:17)
 - Grace is more abundant than sin is rampant (5:20-21)
 - Because we live by grace, sin is no longer our master (6:14)
 - We have received spiritual gifts to serve Christ through His grace (12:6)
 - And at the end of the book, Paul blesses His readers, “The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you” (16:20). All that we have and all that we are is because of God’s grace and it is by God’s grace that we continue to live. If you have anything spiritually, it is because of God’s grace; and if you are in Christ, you have everything you need because of God’s grace.
- But not only does the believer live by grace, he also has *peace* — “grace to you and peace.”
 - ✓ Again, this is part of Paul’s typical way of greeting his readers.
 - ✓ But again, this is also a unique blessing that believers have. We have peace. In Israel, the Hebrew word for “peace,” (shalom) would be used as a greeting. In fact, in Israel it is still used that way to this day. And when one greets another by saying, “Shalom,” it is something of a wish — “Peace be upon you.” But as the Israelites have learned all too well over several millennia, just wishing someone to have peace is no guarantee that they will have it.
 - ✓ Yet when Paul says to the Romans, *peace*, it is a reminder that we have peace. What is the peace that we have? Fundamentally it is a peace with God.
 - We have peace with God (He’s not our enemy, 5:1)
 - We experience life and peace when we our minds are controlled by the Spirit (8:6)
 - We anticipate an eternal kingdom that will be characterized by peace (14:17)
 - We live with each other peacefully because of the peace we have from God (14:19)

- As Paul uses the word, ***peace*** is not only the absence of conflict, but also the presence of blessing — it is a positive attribute of harmony, contentment, unity. We were opposed to God as His enemies and now we are His beloved friends. That's His peace with us.
- ✓ One final note about the phrase ***grace and peace*** — in all 13 of Paul's letters, he always keeps the same order — grace and peace, never peace and grace. Why? Because no one can experience peace before receiving God's grace. God's grace produces the believer's peace.
- It is tempting to just jump over these words, ***grace and peace*** — they are trite; Paul uses them all the time, they don't mean anything. But they do. These words are everything for the believer. Without God's grace we have nothing. We have no salvation, we have no Spirit of God, we have no reconciliation, we have no forgiveness, we have no fellowship, we have no hope, we have no life. In fact, without His grace, we not only don't have spiritual life, but we also don't have physical life; it is His grace that gives us *everything* we have. With God's grace we have everything we need. And with God's grace we also have peace — peace and reconciliation with God and peace with one another. With God's peace we have been restored to Him and with God's peace we can live in harmony with one another. With God's peace the One who was our enemy is now our friend and Father and resides within us changing us to be like Him.

A fourth and final benefit of the gospel is that the believer has fellowship with God the Father —

4. Because of the Gospel the Believer has FELLOWSHIP with God

- Paul offers the Romans a blessing — ***grace and peace*** — and that blessing comes from God: ***from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ***.
 - ✓ It comes from the ***Father***. The believer's relationship with God is fundamentally changed. He is now the Father. Again, Paul will expand that idea later in this letter, emphasizing the access the believer has to God (8:15-17).
 - We are not slaves, but sons.
 - We are not employees, but heirs.
 - We are not against Christ, but with Christ.
 - And we have access to the Father as a "Daddy" (***Abba***, v. 15).
 - He cares for His own and we can go to Him.
 - ✓ But even more than that, He is ***our Father***. He is not just *a* Father, but He is the Father who belongs to us and He cares for us as His own. As our Father He is loving, and as our Father we may go to Him with all our needs. He will not reject us or push us away (Mt. 7:9-11).

- Some of you may have had earthly fathers who gave you “snakes” instead of fish. You were mistreated, unloved, ignored, and sinned against repeatedly. Your father may even have found a perverse sense of pleasure in sinning against you.
- If you are a believer, that can never be true of God your Father. He has a love and care for you that He never fails to show. He knows how to give good gifts; He loves you; and He delights to give what is good to you. Everything He gives you will be for your good. Everything (Rom. 8:28-29).
- And our spiritual blessings and fellowship also come to us through *the Lord Jesus Christ*.
 - ✓ The little word **and** between God and Christ means that the triune Godhead is working in unity and harmony to give us these gifts. God is united in His work for our redemption and joy.
 - ✓ And this final phrase also re-emphasizes that Christ is central in the gospel and our spiritual life.
 - ✓ This entire first sentence has been Paul’s summary of the gospel. He is writing this letter to articulate to the Romans what he believes about the gospel — and these verses are the essence of that belief. And the gospel is all rooted in the person and work of Christ, as we noted in vv. 2-4. Notice all the different ways that Paul has referred to Christ —
 - Christ Jesus (v. 1)
 - His Son (v. 3)
 - Son of God (v. 4)
 - Jesus Christ our Lord (v. 4)
 - Jesus Christ (v. 6)
 - Lord Jesus Christ (v. 7)
 - With these terms, Paul emphasized the humanity of Christ, the deity of Christ, the Messianic role of Christ, and the lordship of Christ. Christ dominates the gospel, so Christ is dominant in Paul’s declaration of the gospel.
 - ✓ And it is this Christ with whom we have fellowship. We who deserved death and judgment, have fellowship with the incarnate God, the sinless Son of God who died for us. God is not just “God.” Because of the cross and Christ, He is now “our God, and our Father.”

CONCLUSION: Most of us have what feels like too much insurance: car insurance, house insurance, life insurance, health insurance, dental insurance, and disability insurance. And then something breaks and we get to test whether or not that insurance has any value or benefit. And too often the benefits are inadequate to our needs. But the benefits of the gospel fit all our needs. We are loved saints who have grace, peace and fellowship. All we need we have in Christ and the gospel.

BENEDICTION: Numbers 6:24-26 (perhaps Paul was echoing Aaron?).