

Romans #3

"Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle ..." so begins the epistle (1:1). This is a common greeting from Paul and ten of his thirteen letters identify him as an "apostle". Only in the letters to the Philippians and Thessalonians does he fail to so identify himself, choosing rather, in those letters, to introduce himself as a "servant of God" (Philippians) or simply with no designation at all (1 and 2 Thessalonians).

Of the ten letters in which he does identify himself as an apostle, all declare him to be an apostle by God's choice. He is an apostle "through the will of God" (1 and 2 Corinthians, Ephesians, Colossians, 2 Timothy) "according to the command of God our Savior" (1 Timothy), "an apostle (not from man, neither through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father ...)" (Galatians), and in Romans "called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God". Other letters contain a greater effort to set forth his credentials (Galatians, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Ephesians) but to the Romans he makes this simple declaration and passes from it unto his subject at hand.

Paul was "separated unto the gospel of God". As noted above, Paul claims his apostleship was from God to the work of an apostle. He was laid hold on by Christ Jesus (Philippians 3:12, except that in this passage he was laid hold on unto salvation). The historian Luke records that God told him when he appeared unto him on the Damascus road: "for to the end have I appeared unto thee, to appoint thee a minister and a witness ..." (Acts 26:16). Luke records that Lord had told Ananias Paul "was a chosen vessel unto me ..." (Acts 9:15) and Paul wrote to the Galatians that God "... separated me, even from my mother's womb" (Galatians 1:15). He was made a minister, became an eyewitness, was a steward, made a debtor and felt that "woe would be unto him if he preached not the gospel" (1 Cor. 9:16).

This gospel of God was "promised afore through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures, concerning his Son ..." (1:2). Readers understand the word "gospel" means good news and it concerned his son Jesus. The Scriptures is a reference to the Old Testament. Paul's appeal to the "scriptures" in Romans is frequent, at least seven times, he appeals or makes reference to them. The "promises" to which he referred would be the promise God made to Abraham that in his seed all the families of the earth would be blessed, which promise was reiterated both to Abraham's son and grandson, Isaac and Jacob. Coupled with this Abrahamic

promise is the Davidic promise, "*Of the fruit of his loins would he raise one up to sit on his throne*" (2 Sam. 7:12). The references to the Messiah in Daniel, either stated or implied would be included (Daniel 7:13-14; 9:25). Not to be excluded are Psalms 2:6 and 110:1 which also were prophecies of the Messiah. When Paul says the holy Scriptures "promised" the gospel which concerned God's Son Jesus, Paul thereby identifies Jesus to be the Messiah of Old Testament scriptures.

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