

1:5 - ...*By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name:*

It is by the resurrected Christ, declared to be the Son of God, that Paul says he has received *grace*—he not only received grace *personally*, as one who was persecuting those who were in Christ before him, but he received God's message and mission of grace to the world, what he calls the *dispensation of grace* in Ephesians 3:2.

It is God's grace dispensed to the world contextually because the next thing, prophetically, that the world was appointed to, was wrath, as after the crucifixion there is only one prophesied week of years left on the prophetic timeline (Dan. 9).

Paul was the first to receive this particular kind of grace (1 Tim. 1:16), and was the administrator of this grace.

All of mankind through history have been saved by grace and faith—no one has ever merited within themselves anything other than condemnation, since the standard of God is *absolute perfection*. But the means by which God has counted their faith for righteousness has often required their outward obedience to His revealed will.

Examples: Rahab (James 2, Joshua 2); Phinehas (Psalm 106, Numbers 25).

The obedience of man in regard to God's revealed will has always been the issue. God has revealed different things to different people throughout history.

The first way we are obedient to *the faith* as we will see later in the book of Romans, is by first accepting our status as sinners who are condemned by our works (Rom. 3:10, 23), and to accept God's offer of salvation by faith alone (Rom. 3:21-28, Rom. 4:5)—that is, to cease from trying to earn God's favor, as we have already been concluded to be sinners.

This is the beginning of our obedience to the faith. As we will see later in Romans, the first step in obedience is to simply believe, and the work God has appointed us to, and the sanctification that takes place to produce that work, will also take place through the power of faith. The works of the flesh will not produce the work God is trying to accomplish in and through us.

The good works God has appointed us to are not simply doing good things. We are called, not according to our works, but according to *His purpose*:

2 Timothy 1:8-10

*Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God; Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel...*

This obedience to the faith is to *all nations*. Contrast this with the ministry of Jesus and the twelve prior—a ministry which pertained to the promises made with Israel specifically.

Romans 1:6 - *The called* of Jesus Christ.

The way God calls humanity today is *through the gospel*.

Consider 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14:

*But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Titus 1:3 says that God hath in due times manifested His word through preaching, which was committed to the apostle Paul according to the commandment of God. It is through this preaching, by God's ambassadors of His grace, that He's calling both Jew and gentile into one Body.

Romans 1:7 - *To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

Romans is addressed to *all that be in Rome* who are called to be saints. As we progress through the Pauline epistles, which are ordered according to the believers process of edification, the greetings become more specific, according to the advancement of doctrine and the audiences maturity.

For instance, Corinthians and Galatians, similar to Romans, are simply addressed to the church of God, whereas Ephesians also includes *to the faithful*; Philippians includes *also with the bishops and deacons*; Colossians *to the saints and the faithful brethren*.

First and second Thessalonians addresses that church *individually*, and commends them for their *work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope* (1 Thess. 1).

To 2 Thessalonians, Paul writes,

*We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth; So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure...*

This could *not* be said of every church Paul addressed.

And by the time you get to 1 Timothy, the address is to an individual himself, *mine own son in the faith*. Imagine this as the voice of the Holy Ghost, speaking to us as mature sons, educated in the will of God. For those who are lead by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God.

2 Timothy, *my dearly beloved son*. To Titus, *mine own son*. Philemon, addressed to a beloved, a fellow laborer, and a fellow soldier, and being an advanced application of the grace doctrine.

Romans 1:8 - *First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.*

Since Paul had not been to Rome, the natural question is, how did these Romans hear about Jesus Christ? It is evident from Romans 16:3-4 that Priscilla and Aquila, who were originally from Rome (and had left under the mandate of Emperor Claudius' expulsion of the Jews), eventually returned there. Paul writes in chapter 16 to the Romans:

Romans 16:3-4

*Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus:*

*Who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles.*

Priscilla and Aquila were fellow laborers with Paul in the ministry (Acts 18, and mentioned in 1 Cor. 16). It stands to reason that perhaps Priscilla and Aquila, having gone back to Rome after the lift of Claudius' mandate, carried on the ministry.

It seems Aquila and Priscilla eventually went back to Ephesus to aid Timothy, because in 2 Timothy 4, Paul writes to Timothy,

*Salute Prisca and Aquila, and the household of Onesiphorus.*

There is one other consideration as to how the Romans could have heard about Jesus, although they would have not known the information Paul was given about the Body of Christ, and that is the Jews who were present at Pentecost, who had come from many different countries, Rome being one of them (Acts 2:10).

The expulsion of the Jews from Rome is estimated to have occurred between AD 41 and AD 53, while Pentecost in Acts 2 is generally recognized to have occurred in 30 AD, thus, the Jews in Jerusalem in Acts 2 would have been able to freely go back to their homes in Rome after the feast of Pentecost. These Jews may have heard the preaching of Peter and been part of those who believed.

The only problem with this theory is that part of the apostles doctrine was to sell all you had and become part of the church at Jerusalem. We see this happen with Barnabas, who was from Cyprus, who sold his land and joined Peter and the church in Jerusalem, and who later became a fellow apostle alongside Paul.

Romans 1:9-12

*1:9 For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers;*

*1:10 Making request, if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you.*

*1:11 For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established;*

*1:12 That is, that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me.*

This “spiritual gift” is not clearly identified, but the purpose of it is. The purpose of this spiritual gift was to the end that they would be established. Romans 16:25 says that God is of power to establish the saint according to *Paul’s gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the mystery*, and so, this gift, whatever it was, of necessity had to communicate and minister those two truths. The gifts communicated specific revelation about what God was doing in the dispensation of grace. As we see in the following verse, that establishment would produce a mutual faith both to Paul and the Romans; this is *the “faith,”* or, the common faith as articulated in Titus 1.

*1:13 Now I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that oftentimes I purposed to come unto you, (but was let hitherto,) that I might have some fruit among you also, even as among other Gentiles.*

*1:14 I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise.*

*1:15 So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also.*

Paul was a debtor to all men, to the Greek, the barbarian, and the Jew. The only audience Paul did not directly minister to was the believing remnant of Israel (Gal. 2:9, Rom. 15:19-20).

The believing remnant did however learn about the further revelation given to Paul (Gal. 2:6-7, 2 Peter 3:15-16).

Jesus made His commission for Paul known from the beginning. Jesus tells Ananias of Damascus:

Acts 9:15-16

*But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel:*

*For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.*

Paul recounts his Damascus road experience before King Agrippa in Acts 26:

Acts 26:16-18

*But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee;*

*Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.*

*1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.*

*1:17 For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.*

The gospel of Christ is God's power unto salvation for all, for in it is God's righteousness revealed. The cross was a public display of all of God's Holy attributes: His demand for justice against sin and His wrath against sin on the one hand, and His love for His creation and His mercy and grace on the other hand, all consummated in one sacrificial act. God's righteousness is displayed in the cross, and is the only way God could punish and forgive sin simultaneously—the cross was the only way God could forgive sinners and maintain His righteousness as a perfect judge who demonstrates perfect justice at all times.

It is God's righteousness by which we are justified (Rom. 3:21-22, 3:26).

This principle of God's righteousness displayed in the gospel is the first principle of righteousness found in Romans 1. Chapter one will go on to expound the righteousness of God in His wrath against sin (Rom. 1:18) and the unrighteousness of man (Rom. 1:18-32), setting the stage for the coming legal case the Holy Ghost is building which will eventually culminate in the conclusion that one must be justified by faith.

From faith to faith, contextually, the righteousness of God is revealed through the gospel of Christ to the faith of both Jew and Greek alike. Another possible interpretation of this is from (the) faith to (our) faith, the faith being the origin of truth, and revealed to us for the obedience of our faith.