

Romans 1:1a by Wayne Barber

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Romans 1:1-4

Romans 1:1a: Paul: A Man That God Can Use!

by Dr. Wayne Barber

I want you to look at Romans chapter 1 verse 1. It begins, "Paul,..." Now stop right there. I want you to see some things about this wonderful man that God used to write the book of Romans. The reason I am stopping you right there is that in Romans, Ephesians, I and II Timothy and Titus, Paul stands alone. In all of his other epistles it is Paul and Timothy or other companions. When Paul stands alone, nobody beside him, God's instrument to deliver the doctrine that God had assigned to him, you had better strap your seat belts on because he is going to knock you out of your chair.

Paul had never been to Rome. We don't know that he had any kind of influence on the Christians who were there in Rome. This book is one of the greatest pieces of work that have ever been written on the theology of our salvation. It is so important to see. Some people even call it the constitution of our faith.

There are four basic parts to the book of Romans. We have said many times when you eat an elephant you do it one bite at a time. There are four big bites to the book of Romans. First of all it is chapters 1-5 (see chart above). That is the first bite we will take out of the book. The second bite that we will take out of Romans will be chapters 6-8. The third is chapters 9-11, and the fourth is chapters 12-16. That is going to be our approach to the book of Romans. If you tried to do it all at one time, it would be overwhelming. When you read through it, read through the whole book, but notice chapters 1-5.

In chapter 3 I want you to start recognizing something. Get something so you can mark your Bible. As you mark your Bible, notice in chapter 3 that the Apostle Paul begins to ask questions. Then he will answer those questions. That goes on for many chapters in the book. So in chapter 3 start underlining those questions and look at the answers. It is like Paul is a lawyer in a courtroom and he calls the gospel to the witness stand. You won't believe what God is going to show you in the book of Romans and how it will set you free

as to what God has done for each of us in our salvation.

We are going to introduce the book of Romans by looking at the man who wrote it. I am calling this, **Paul, a Man that God Can Use**". There are three things that I want us to look at.

First of all is the fact that Paul was a willing man.

Second, Paul was a burdened man

Third, Paul was a patient man.

Do you want to be used by God? All of us want to be used of the Lord. We are going to see this from a man God used so beautifully in the New Testament. We are going to see what made him up, what he was made out of.

PAUL THE BONDSERVANT A WILLING MAN

The key to the whole thing is in verse 1: ([click](#) for more on Romans 1:1)

"Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God."

Paul says, "I am a bond-servant of Christ Jesus." Now the word **bond-servant**" there is the word *doulos*, which means **"slave."** Paul says, "I am a slave to the Lord Jesus Christ."

He is saying,

"I am absolutely sold out to His will. I am willing to do whatever He tells me to do. I am willing to say whatever He tells me to say. I am willing to go wherever He leads me. I am a man who has made a choice. I am going to serve Him for all eternity."

He is a bond-servant, a slave of the Lord Jesus Christ.

If you will look back with me in ([Acts 22](#)) we find something about him the moment he met Jesus on the Damascus Road. It was quite a dramatic conversion. Paul wasn't seeking Jesus. He was on his way to arrest people who loved the Lord Jesus. Jesus was seeking Paul and He met him on that Damascus Road. When He met him, instead of Paul arresting Christians, Christ arrested Paul. We see the greatest enemy of Christ become the greatest apostle for Christ.

But there is something in Acts 22:10 that is not recorded in his conversion experience in Acts 9:3, 4, 5, 6. Paul is giving his testimony here before the authorities and he is at the point when he recognized that it was Jesus who met him on the Damascus Road. He says in verse 10,

"And I said, 'What shall I do, Lord?'"

From that point on there is no backing up in Paul's life. Every bit of the zeal and energy he had spent in persecuting the church, he turns it around, having met Christ and now puts all that energy into serving the Lord Jesus Christ. Do you want to know why God could use him? Because he was a bond-servant of the Lord Jesus Christ, a slave to whatever God wanted in his life.

Jesus says something in John 15:14, 15 that is interesting. Paul is not present in the group of the original disciples. In John 13-17 Jesus privately speaking with His disciples and in John 15:14 He declares to them...

"You are My friends, if you do what I command you."

In John 15:15.

"No longer do I call you slaves [doulos, the same word that Paul uses in Romans 1:1], for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you."

In other words, you don't have to do for me because I am making you. You are My friends. I don't call you slaves anymore. Isn't it interesting that Paul and James and Peter and Jude and the Apostle John in Revelation 1:1 all called themselves slaves of Jesus Christ. But Jesus said you are no longer slaves.

What we are seeing here is the service of what I would call perfect freedom, having been set free, having been loved, they, now being overwhelmed by what He has done for them, have turned around and said,

"Lord, if we leave You, where would we go? No man can serve two masters. We only have two choices. I am either going to serve myself or I am going to serve You. Lord, I don't want to serve myself. I am going to turn

and I am going to serve You."

Out of perfect freedom they make the choice to serve the Lord Jesus Christ.

I want to ask you a question. Why do you serve the Lord Jesus Christ?

"Well, I had better. God will kill me if I don't."

You know, I've talked to a lot of people who have that mentality. It is as if God has a big club and if you don't do what He wants you to do, then He will hit you over the head with it. Yet God says,

"Wait a minute. I have set you free. You are free now to be what you ought to be. Make up your mind. No man can serve two masters."

The person who has any sense at all will say,

"Lord, You have overwhelmed me. I am making a choice out of love for You to be Your slave. I know I am no longer Your slave, but I choose to be Your slave."

Do you want to be used by the Lord? Come to the place in your life that you are willing to say,

"God, it doesn't matter what You tell me to do, I am willing to be submissive to Your will."

When you come to that place, God will do things through you like He did through Paul.

One picture beautiful picture of a slave is found in Deuteronomy 15:12-17:

"If your kinsman, a Hebrew man or woman, is sold to you, then he shall serve you six years, but in the seventh year you shall set him free. And when you set him free, you shall not send him away empty-handed. You shall furnish him liberally from your flock and from your threshing floor and from your wine vat; you shall give to him as the Lord your God has blessed you. And you shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God redeemed you; therefore I command you this today. And it shall come about if he says to you, 'I will not go out from you,' because he loves you and your household, since he fares well with you; then you shall take an awl and pierce it through his ear into the door, and he shall be your servant forever. And also you shall do likewise to your maidservant."

What a picture. Slavery in that day and time was nothing like we know today. The slaves had to be treated as if they were your own children in your own family. You had to treat them with dignity and integrity. After they had served you for a period of time, you had to set them free. But the beautiful picture here is of a slave. He served a master for seven years. The master has loved him, provided for him, been kind to him, helped him, all the things that you would look for. Now the day comes that he has been set free. He is given of the flock, given of the threshing floor, given of the wine vat. This servant stands there, and he says,

"You know, I have been so cared for during the seven years that I have worked with you, where would I go? I don't know where I am going to go. Nobody would love me like you have loved me. Nobody would do for me what you have done for me. Why, I am going to choose to be your slave. I know you have set me free, but because of who you are and because of my love for you, I want to continue to be your slave. I want to do for you not because I have to but because I just want to."

What a picture. They had a public ceremony and they would take that little instrument and put it up by their ear and drive it through the ear into the door, leaving a hole in the ear. What a picture when you see this slave walking alongside his master, smiling. You would see that man and you knew he had been with him seven years, maybe it is three years down the road past that seven years and you say,

"Isn't that wonderful! That man was set free and now that man has chosen to serve out of love for his master."

Man looks on the outside. God looks at our heart. Why are you serving the Lord Jesus? If you don't love Him, if you haven't understood that nobody else will ever treat you like Jesus, then no wonder you are not being used of the Lord in the task He has assigned to His church. A man that God can use is a person who is willing to bow, a person who is willing to say,

"God, I just want what You want in my life."

I want to tell you something. God is waiting on us to love Him and to bow before Him and to make conscious choices. "God, you have given me everything. If I left you, where would I go? Lord, I want to serve you. No man can serve two masters. I want to serve You. I want to be usable in the kingdom of God." That is the Apostle Paul. He was a man who was willing, sold out to the will of God.

PAUL THE BONDSERVANT

A BURDENED MAN

Second, not only was he willing to be a servant, Paul had a burden for His fellowman. I want you to see this. In Mark 10 we find that the Lord Jesus gives this as a principle in the Christian walk. Until you come to the place that you are willing to serve Him, you will never come to the place that you are willing to serve others. Servant hood starts with Him. As we love Him we can start loving others. In Mark 10:43, 44 we see Jesus use two different words. In verse 43 he uses the word **diakonos**, (see discussion of related word diakonia) which means a servant. That is the word that is also translated deacon. It just simply means a servant, a person willing to bow down and humble himself and do what is necessary. Verse 43 reads,

"But it is not so among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant."

That's not the same word as in Romans 1:1.

Then in verse 44 He says,

"and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be slave of all."

Do you want to be exalted in the Kingdom? Do you really want to be usable in the kingdom and recognized? To be exalted you have to humble yourself. The only way up is the way down. You have to become a slave of all. The word "slave" there is the word **doulos**.

The Apostle Paul has found the secret of what Jesus is saying. He is saying,

"Listen, if you will love Me with everything in you, then I will give you a burden for other people. You will not only be a servant to Me, you will become a servant to others."

No wonder Paul could write what he wrote in 2Corinthians 4:5:

"For we do not preach ourselves [our own message] but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bond-servants for Jesus' sake."

Paul is saying,

"I am your servant for His sake. First of all, I am His slave and as a result of that, I am your servant."

If you will look in 1Corinthians 9:19, you will see what happens when this takes place. When you have a believer who is a bond-servant of Christ, who is willing to sell out to His will out of a love motive, who is so grateful for what He has done for them, look out because God is going to use them. In verse 19 Paul says,

"For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all."

Isn't it amazing, I am free from them. However, because of Christ in me, I have made myself a slave to all. Why? "that I might win the more." The only way this world is ever going to be won to Jesus is not because people have memorized the plan of salvation and know how to give out tracts. The way the people of the world are going to be won to Jesus is by disciples, Christians, who are surrendered as bond-servants to Christ. Becoming a bond-servant to Him, you become a slave to all men. You are willing to serve them. You are willing to be used by God in their lives and therefore, God then can do something eternal through you.

Paul was a burdened man. Because he was a willing man, he was a burdened man. Look in Romans 1:7. We find something about his audience and we begin to see the heart that Paul has for other believers no matter where they are. You see the same heart with Ephesians. You see the same heart in Corinthians. Now we see the same heart with the Roman believers. Not just for the believers but for the lost folks. Right here in verse 7, however, it focuses on the family of God. Look at what he says:

"to all who are beloved of God in Rome, called as saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."

He uses some phrases there that show you that beautiful endearing heart that he has for the family of God. I want to show you something. When you are willing to be a bond-servant to God, then you will be willing to be a slave to men and you are going to begin to have a love for the family of God like never before. Paul uses a term that is a family word. He said, "beloved of God in Rome." That word "beloved" is never used in the New Testament for lost people. Never, not one time. But it is always used for the family of God. It is a family word.

John 3:16 says,

"God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."

God loves the world. Beloved refers to His children, those who have been birthed into His family. Beloved is a family word.

Paul is a family member. Paul knows there are believers over in Rome. Paul is most likely in Corinth. When he writes to them he is surrounded by all the paganism of the day. Rome was a pagan city. But in the midst of that city is the family of God. They are in it but not of it. He says, "to all who are beloved of God." What a gorgeous term! Now you may love my children, but you don't love them like I love them. To me they are beloved. I don't love your children like you love them. Beloved is a family word, and when you put it in the spiritual context you start becoming a bond-servant to Him. No wonder you are willing to be a slave to all men, especially in the family of God. You are part of the beloved.

Paul says something else to them. He says secondly, "called as saints." What do we mean by that? The word "saint" is the idea of somebody who has been put into a class all by themselves. "Do you mean to tell me I am in the world, but I am not of the world? Do you mean I am beloved? Do you mean I am part of the family? Do you mean to tell me I am in a class all by myself?" That is what the word means, to be set apart. It has the idea of being taken out of the mire, washed and put up on the rock with a brand new song in your heart. There is something brand new that has taken place.

We are usable to the degree that we are willing to surrender. God has made us potentially usable. He has put us in a class all by ourselves. The Apostle Paul knows that. The Apostle, in writing the letter to the Romans, uses these endearing terms, "the beloved of God in Rome." He uses the term "**saints**." Paul is saying,

"You are in a special class all by yourself and I am joining with you. I am a part of you."

This is family talk now. I want to tell you something. When the Apostle Paul wrote to the believers, whether in Corinth or Ephesus or wherever it was, he never wrote out of boredom. He wrote out of a burden. Remember that.

Something really struck me about Paul. He wasn't burdened to go over and hold their hands while they were sick. Now, there are many who are. Paul wasn't. You see, your burden will be manifested through the gift that God has given to you. Some of you will express your burden for the body in one way and others will express it another way. Those who have been gifted to teach and to preach don't want to come beside you. They want to make sure they protect you with the Word of God so that you can be guarded on all fronts.

The Apostle Paul is simply saying,

"I need to write you. You are the dearly beloved. You are among pagans."

There were the legalists in his day—and you will see this addressed in Romans—who said that you had to be circumcised to be saved. They said you might be saved by grace but you are kept by the Law. They were the antinomians of his time. These were the people who said once you get saved, you can still live in sin because the more you sin, the more grace abounds. Heresy!

Romans 6:1 (notes) addresses this:

"What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace might increase?"

Paul says,

"Absolutely not. May it never be so." (Ro 6:1,2, 3notes)

He sees these tender Christians over there, the beloved of God. He sees their whole faith being at risk. If they let error get in, then they will not understand how to be a bond-servant of Christ. So he writes one of the most beautiful letters, a theological treatise of what salvation is all about. Why? Because he was burdened. But he would have never been burdened had he not been willing to be a bond-servant for Christ.

Look in Romans 15:15. If you track the phrase "I have written," or "I wrote" or "I write" it will give you an idea of why it is that Paul wrote what he wrote. He says,

"But I have written very boldly to you on some points, so as to remind you again because of the grace that was given me from God."

"The only way I can write to you," Paul says, "is the grace that was given to me from God. But I am writing these things to you to remind you of some things that you already know."

If you want to be used of God, you've got to start at square number one. A comes before B. A is saying,

"God, I am willing. God, I am so overwhelmed that you set me free that I want to be your slave forever. Nobody has ever done for me what you have done for me. I need to have a higher view of my salvation, a higher view of Christ, a higher view of the Word. God, I submit myself to you."

Once you do that, God begins to quicken within you a burden, not only for the lost, but especially for the endearing family of God. All

of a sudden you find a Christian and you just love them. You want to protect them. You want to come along beside them, and you will do it out of your gift. Serving is a natural because once you become His slave, you will become other's slave.

PAUL THE BONDSERVANT A PATIENT MAN

Paul was a willing man.

Paul was a burdened man.

But third, Paul was a patient man.

Look at Romans 1:9-15. We will get to this in greater detail as we discuss it later verse by verse but now we are simply introducing the book of Romans. But in verse 9 he says,

"For God, whom I serve in my spirit in the preaching of the gospel of His Son, is my witness as to how unceasingly I make mention of you, always in my prayers making request, if perhaps now at last by the will of God I may succeed in coming to you."

Paul has wanted to go to Rome for a long time, but for some reason or another God has had other ideas. God gave Paul the burden to go to Rome, but God has not yet allowed that to take place. In Romans 1:13 Paul says

"For I long to see you"

Romans 1:13 says,

"And I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that often I have planned to come to you (and have been prevented thus far) in order that I might obtain some fruit among you also, even as among the rest of the Gentiles. I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. Thus, for my part, I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome."

Paul wants to go to Rome. When you are surrendered to the will of God, then you give up your own agenda and you accept His. He may burden you with something but the timing may not be right. Paul said, "I have been wanting to come but I have been hindered and hindered and hindered, but that is okay. I am going to come to you. I am going to come as soon as I can. I want to get there."

I want to show you how patient a man he was. Look at Romans 15:22, 23. He restates the fact that he wants to come to them:

"For this reason I have often been hindered from coming to you; but now, with no further place for me in these regions, and since I have had for many years a longing to come to you whenever I go to Spain."

In other words, Paul was saying,

"Oh, I am about to come! I am going to make a trip to Spain and I am going to stop off to see you."

Then he says in Romans 15:25,

"but now, I am going to Jerusalem serving the saints."

What is he going to be doing over in Jerusalem? Paul is writing the letter. He says,

"I am coming to see you. I've wanted to get there for so long. I am going to go to Jerusalem first and then I am heading towards Spain. I will be there to see you. It may take two or three months, but it won't be long now. I can't wait to see you. I have never been there before. I can't wait to preach the gospel in Rome."

In Romans 15:26 he explains...

"For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem."

A famine was going on in Jerusalem, and they took up an offering among the Gentile churches. The Gentiles said,

"We appreciate you, the Jews, because through you the covenants came. This is how we came to know Christ. You shared with us spiritually, now let us share with you materially."

They took up an offering to send it back over to the saints in Jerusalem. The Apostle Paul said, "I've got to take that offering first. But when I get over there, as soon as I finish, I am heading to see you because I am on my way to Spain."

Look at what he says in Romans 15:30:

"Now I urge you, brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God for me, that I may be delivered from those who are disobedient in Judea."

You see, he senses something bad is going to happen in Judea when he gets to Jerusalem. He doesn't know for sure but he senses it in his heart. He says,

"You better pray for me. I am coming to see you. I have wanted to get there for a long time. Everything has hindered me from getting there but I am coming. God has burdened me with you. I will be there soon. I am going to go to Jerusalem and on my way to Spain I will stop by."

In Romans 16:1 we get the clue as to where he is when he writes this:

"I commend to you our sister Phoebe, who is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea."

[Cenchrea](#) is a port city right outside of Corinth, which is a city in Greece. Most people think that Paul is in [Corinth](#) when he writes this letter. In Romans 16:2, Paul requests

"that you receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints, and that you help her in whatever matter she may have need of you; for she herself has also been a helper of many, and of myself as well."

He is saying,

"Phoebe is going to bring this letter to you. I am about to go to Jerusalem. I am going on to Spain. I am sending a precious little servant of the church."

With that in mind, go to Acts 20:1ff and we will fill in the blanks. I won't do it all for you at this point, but we will at least look at it. I just love to watch things fit together. It is like a big puzzle coming together. I want to show you a principle in it. This is right after Paul has left [Ephesus](#). A man by the name of Demetrius didn't like the gospel because it threatened his pocketbook. They had an uproar in Ephesus. Paul leaves. Verse 1 reads,

"And after the uproar ceased, Paul sent for the disciples and when he had exhorted them and taken his leave of them, he departed to go to [Macedonia](#)."

[Macedonia](#) is located in the northern part of Greece, right "on top". Verse 2 continues,

"And when he had gone through those districts and had given them much exhortation, he came to Greece. And there he spent three months, and when a plot was formed against him by the Jews as he was about to set sail for Syria, he determined to return through Macedonia."

Let me give you the story. Paul is writing them and he says,

"I am coming to see you. I am going to Jerusalem first."

He gets ready to set sail. You would go to the port in Syria then you would come down. But before he goes, he discovers a plot that has been formed against him to kill him. So instead of going in the direction he would normally have gone, he goes north to Macedonia, then makes his journey down the coast to go on to Jerusalem. That is when he stopped off at [Miletus](#) and called the Ephesian elders to him (see Acts 20:17ff) and said,

"I won't see you any more. I am going to Jerusalem."

When he gets to Jerusalem, Paul goes to the council of elders that are there in the church. He said,

"I've got great news! I got an offering from the Gentiles for you Jews and not only that, the Gentiles are receiving the gospel like you wouldn't believe!"

They said,

"Paul, I'm glad you have good news. We have bad news for you. The word has come to us that the Jews around here don't like you anymore. They are saved but they are still hung up in the Law and they think you are preaching against the Temple and preaching against the Law. So I tell you what you need to do. Go down to the Temple and cleanse yourself of the vow that you have taken. Then they will understand that you are not preaching against their Law. You are just showing the fulfillment of that Law. You are not preaching against their Temple. You are just showing how Jesus indwells peoples lives that is now the New Temple on this earth."

Paul does what the elders say to do. He goes to the Temple and there are some Jews from Asia Minor. They don't like Paul. He

preaches Jesus. They love the Law. They dream up a rumor on him that he has taken a Greek behind the barrier of the dividing wall and for that reason he ought to be put to death. There was a sign posted in the Temple that no Gentile could ever enter beyond the barrier or the dividing wall in the Temple. The rumor was a lie, a total lie, but the Jews in the area believed it, and a riot took place. They were going to lynch Paul on the spot. They had to sneak him out from the city and take him down to Caesarea.

He gets down to Caesarea and what do they do? They put him in jail for over two years. Wait a minute! The guy hasn't done anything. He just did what the elders told him to do! But he got put into jail for over two years. They were about to set him free but Paul says,

"No way. I want a hearing before Caesar himself."

Agrippa said,

"Well, okay. I would have set you free. If you want to go to Rome, we will send you to Rome."

Go back now to Paul's heartbeat.

"I am coming to you. I am coming to you."

He had no idea how he was going to get there, did he? In shackles. They put him on a ship as a prisoner to go to Rome. What happened to the ship? They had a wreck. They are on the island of Malta for three months. Tremendous things happened on the island of Malta. Finally he gets to Rome, three years later! In 57 A.D. he writes them a letter from Corinth. In March of 60 A.D. he finally gets there.

But I want to show you something about him. **Since he was a bond-servant to Jesus Christ, he was willing to accept the delays and never call them denials.** He knew that God worked in specific ways and he is not out to question God.

"God you put a burden on my heart for Rome. I am not angry at you. I am about your business. Where do you want me? Do you want me in prison? Good. I will just be an example for you while I am there."

It was three years before he got to those Romans. Paul is a patient man. He was willing to endure the time it took for him to get there. He was willing to endure the hassle of how he had to get there. He didn't walk into town and set up a tent and preach a revival meeting. He went in as a prisoner. They put him in jail there, and during that two year imprisonment in Rome he wrote Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon, one of the greatest set of books in the whole New Testament.

What am I trying to say? There are a lot of people in the church who want God's will in their life. Do you know why they can't find it? It is because they have put a time table on God. They have said,

"I have got plan B if you don't come through like I want you to come through."

Do you know when you find God's will? Be willing to accept it the way He does it and say,

"God, whatever you want, I want. I am a bond-servant to you. I have no rights, only the privilege of choosing out of love to be your slave. What do you want for me, Lord?"

Live your life that way.

Do you want to be used of the Lord?

You may say,

"I am not an Apostle."

Neither am I, not in the biblical sense. But I want to tell you something. If you want to be used, make a decision. You can't serve two masters. Which one are you going to serve? Secondly, it is not just in serving Him, how are you going to serve Him?

Make a choice out of freedom.

"Lord, you are not making me do anything. Out of love I am choosing to be your slave and whatever you want in my life, I will thank you for it. I will serve you, so therefore I can serve others with the gifts you have given me. Thank you for the burden you have put on my heart for other people and thank you for the patience to let you do whatever you want to do in my life in the meantime."

You've got to make a choice.

Make up your mind. Are you going to serve Jesus or are you going to serve yourself?

You will never be used of God until you abandon yourself to Him.

There is no in-between.