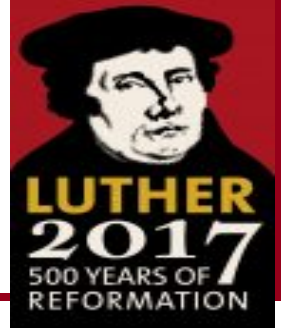


# *Called, Loved, and Holy*

Acts 9:1-19 Romans 1:1-7

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St. Paul calls himself the *least* of the apostles; he even refers to himself as the “*Chief of sinners*”. He was a *rabid persecutor* of Christians who is described in terms of a wild animal in his rage against the Church. **But yet the Lord intervened in his life and made him the most influential apostle of them all!**

Today we heard His conversion story on the road to Damascus ... it was Paul’s “Call to faith and Apostleship.” It was a dramatic event where Jesus appears in full glory and power, knocks Paul off of his horse, reveals Himself as the great “I AM” of the Old Testament, and blinds Paul. After three days, the Lord sends Ananias to Paul in order to preach the Gospel, to pronounce absolution, and to baptize him.

This dramatic conversion story is both Paul’s Call to faith and His Call to apostleship. *It dramatically highlights that God intervenes in our lives to call us to faith.*

Here is how St. Paul describes his “Call” in the first verse of the Book of Romans:

**Paul, a slave of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle  
and set apart for the gospel of God**

Romans 1:1

Paul notes first that He is a **slave of Christ**; this is the idea of ownership. He belongs to Christ Jesus; he was “bought and paid for” by the blood of Christ on the cross. Salvation is described in terms of payment --- words like **redemption** and **ransom** are economic word pictures to teach us that a price was paid for our salvation. Through faith in Christ, you no longer belong to the world and its ways, but you belong to the Lord Jesus Christ. **Remember, NO ONE is “independent”; you either belong to the sinful world that is perishing, or you belong to Christ and are saved. There is no “middle ground”**. Through faith, you belong to Christ, whose death on the cross paid for you. You belong to God and so does St. Paul. Like Paul, you are “**a slave of Christ Jesus**”.

Not only is St. Paul a slave of Christ, but he is also “**called to be an Apostle**.” This was God’s **specific gift** to St. Paul. He was an **apostle**. The Lord Jesus personally chose Paul, He appeared to Him in His resurrected body in full glory, and converted him and commissioned him to preach the Gospel to all nations. An apostle is the **official representative** of Jesus Christ. Paul did his missionary work in **the power and authority of the Lord Jesus Christ**. He is an **Ambassador for Christ**; He is an **Apostle of Christ**.

**Paul’s apostolic authority remains even today**. The things that St. Paul wrote in the NT remain the authority in our lives. His 13 books in the New Testament are part of the inspired and inerrant Holy Scriptures: by inspiration of the Holy Spirit St. Paul wrote:

**Romans, 1&2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1&2 Thessalonians, 1&2 Timothy, Titus and Philemon.**

In addition , the Apostle Paul oversaw the writing of the **Gospel of Luke** and the **Book of Acts**.

When you read St. Paul’s books, you are reading the words of a **called Apostle who was set apart by the Lord Jesus Himself**. Paul is an **authorized representative** of the Lord Jesus; He is an **ambassador** of Christ, the same as if Christ Himself were speaking to you. That makes St. Paul an authority in our lives.

This summer, we will be spending time looking at Paul's book to the Romans. It is considered one of the greatest New Testament books because Paul teaches the doctrines of Law and Gospel very carefully. The Book of Romans will go a long way to help make you even more Biblically literate, doctrinally sound, mission minded, and passionately engaged as a disciple. As you read, hear, and study the book of Romans, you read, hear, and study the very Words of Christ through His *called apostle!*

**Not only is St. Paul called and set apart by Christ, but so are you.** We haven't been called and set apart to be apostles, but God has called you and set you apart to be disciple. You have been baptized, and you spend the rest of your life hearing, learning, and obeying the Word of God.

Here is how St. Paul describes the Roman believers, which also describes us:

And you also are among those Gentiles who are **called to belong** to Jesus Christ. To all in Rome who are **loved by God** and **called to be his holy people**: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ. ROMANS 1:6-7

The same Jesus Who called St. Paul also called you – just in a different way. **God called you to belong to Jesus Christ in holy baptism.** The Lord Jesus worked through **His Word** and water to **intervene** in your life and to forgive you your sins. Baptism is your call to faith as God creates faith and gives you new life. And just like St. Paul's dramatic conversion, **it is 100% the work of God.** God's "Call" highlights that He takes the initiative to save you; it is purely God's grace, His mercy, and His kindness to you. **In Holy Baptism, the Lord Jesus forgiveness your sins, delivers you from death and the devil, and gives you eternal salvation as His words and promises declare.**

To use the words of Romans chapter one, **God has set you apart for the Gospel of God; the Gospel He promised beforehand through the prophets of the Old Testament. You believe the Gospel concerning God's Son, who according to His earthly life was a descendant of David, and who through the Spirit of Holiness was appointed the Son of God in power by His resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord.**

God has called you to faith, set you apart, declared you “holy”, and has given you purpose and meaning for your life. *You are loved by God and you are called to be holy.* “Holiness” means that you have been “set apart”. God has set you apart from the world so that you can live a life of love and good works. Holiness means . . .

- That you consider yourself a slave of the Lord Jesus Christ; you belong to Him
- That you are concerned about God’s Gospel concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord
- That you realize that you are part of the Holy Christian Church and live in God’s community of believers
- That you hear and respond to the God’s Holy Word and you intentionally shape your life around it.
- That you have been given the Holy Spirit to live a holy life!

**God has called you to faith, set you apart, declared you “holy”, and has given you purpose and meaning for your life.**

You belong to Him and you live differently than those who are still in sin, guilt, shame, and death. You have been “called” and *set apart* to live **HOLY LIVES** according to the 10 Commandments.

God declares you HOLY through faith in Christ!

One of the truths of salvation is that “*we are what God says we are!*” Even though it may not look like it to others, and it might not feel like it to yourself, but the fact remains that God has Called you by name to be His very own. **You are what God says you are!** **GOD SAYS THAT YOU BELONG TO HIM AND YOU ARE HOLY!** *You are what God says you are!*

Through the Gospel of God’s Son Jesus Christ, you have been called to faith, declared holy, set apart from the world, and given true purpose and meaning for life.

**Go and live each day in your “Call” from God!**

AMEN!