

Romans: A Solid Foundation for Christian Living

Message 3: What Happens When You Meet Jesus?

Text: Romans 1:5-6

Significant relationships change your life. Have you noticed that? It's not true of all relationships. You can have casual relationships that are just that, casual. People come into your life and go without much effect. But a significant relationship is different. In fact, one might define significant relationships by the fact that they are life altering. When I first met Karen in our days at East Texas Baptist University, ours was a casual relationship. But at some point on a December night in 1984, that began to change. Soon afterward we were engaged, and later married. And life was different. I no longer lived for myself. My stuff was not just my stuff. I now had someone else to look after, someone depending on me as I depended on her. Life was different. Such is the effect of a significant relationship on one's life.

In Romans 1:5-6, the apostle Paul speaks of a significant relationship. It is his relationship with the Lord. Continuing his introduction for what would be his most detailed description of the gospel, he refers back to when he first met Jesus Christ on the Damascus road. In doing so he describes the effect that this relationship had on his life. Listen as I read vs. 1-6 again, giving special attention this morning to verses 5 & 6 (read).

Now Paul in these verses is speaking primarily about himself and his colleagues. He began with an introduction of himself and the gospel he was called to preach (which we considered in the first two messages of this study), and then Paul says, "*It is through him that we received grace and apostleship to call people from among all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith.*" Do you know what he's doing? He's giving his testimony. He's telling us in abbreviated form what happened in his life when he met Jesus – when he entered a significant relationship with him. And in doing so, he describes what is to happen when we have the same kind of relationship.

Significant relationships change your life. If they don't, then they are not really significant. And this is important for us to grasp, for there is a lot of casual Christianity going on around us. There are a lot of people who claim to know Christ, but the relationship makes no difference in how they look at the world, what they think, want, or do. But a true love-relationship with the Lord brings exactly this change. Read Acts chapter 9 and you see Paul's transformation from an angry religious man bent on destroying the Christian faith into the world's leading communicator of Christ's love. Depending on how much you grow in the Lord, the change might not be quite as dramatic, but there is definitely a change. And Paul describes this change here. In fact, vs. 5-6 tell us two things that definitely happen in the life of a person when he meets Jesus – when you truly and significantly know the Lord. And

they are important for us to know, for they will help us to assess our own lives – to see where we stand in our relationship with Christ.

See, from a spiritual perspective, everyone rates at one of four points. Either these qualities will be clearly evident in your life and you are at least growing in your relationship with the Lord. You're saved and sure. Or these qualities are only barely discernable, or even not discernable at all. In which case you are either still a spiritual babe, not giving any real attention yet to growing in the Lord (1 Cor. 3:1). Or you are a rebel – you know that you have given your life to Christ, but in one or more areas of life you are rejecting His direction for you (Heb. 12:7-8). Or you are lost, having never really trusted your life to Jesus Christ. These latter three are all dangerous positions to be in and do nothing, for the longer we remain the less assurance we can have. But I trust as we look at the scripture, the Holy Spirit will make things clear.

But there are two things here in these verses that happen when you meet Jesus Christ.

1. First, you receive God's grace.

Vs. 5: "*through whom you have received grace...*"

Grace = God's unmerited favor. The word was used to describe the favor a greater would show to a lesser. So here is God – the greatest and highest of all – showing favor (love, kindness, help, support, provision, strength) to us, his creation. Of course, the central aspect of grace is His salvation.

Now grace is the theme of Romans, and it is the cornerstone of the Christian faith. Miss the point of grace, and you miss the point of the gospel. Understand grace, and you are on the way to becoming what God created you to be.

So let's pause for a moment to see what it means to receive God's grace:

- **Receiving God's grace is to receive something you did not deserve.** Grace is **unmerited** favor. So only sinners can receive it. Grace cannot save those who are good. Those who believe that they deserve it have no part of God's grace. That's why the religious leaders of Jesus' day missed it (Mk. 2:17, "*It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.*") This is why repentance is so crucial to saving faith.
- **Receiving God's grace is to be personally saved from sin and death.** Grace is **God's favor**. It is salvation for those who deserve the opposite, death (Rom. 6:23). Paul told the Ephesians that it is by grace that they are saved. Being saved implies that there is a danger to be

rescued from. In Matt. 25:41 Jesus describes the judgment of the lost when he says, “Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels...’” On the other hand, Rom. 3:24 says that those who are lost may be “justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.”

- **Receiving God’s grace is to receive such salvation through faith in Christ.** Being saved doesn’t happen automatically. It’s not because of who we are, or it wouldn’t be grace. In Rom. 1:5, Paul says it is through him – meaning Jesus – that we receive grace. Literally: By means of Christ you receive grace. In other words, there is nothing that you can do to obtain it or earn it. You receive it. It is God’s gift to you. The only condition is faith – belief – trust – in Jesus Christ (Eph. 2:8-9, “By grace you have been saved through faith...”). It’s not by saying a prayer that you are saved. It’s not when you ask Jesus into your heart that you are saved. It is when in your heart you believe – when you trust Christ as your personal Lord and Savior – that you receive grace and salvation.

But this is what happens. This is what it means to receive the grace of God. When you meet Jesus – truly meet Him – seeing the reality of sin in your life, you turn to Christ. He gives you His grace. He saves you.

2. Second, you receive God’s appointment.

Vs. 5: “grace and apostleship...”

Remember, in this intro Paul is at first speaking of himself. He’s giving his testimony. So he says, “when I received God’s grace, I also received His appointment as an apostle to preach Christ to the Gentiles.”

Now the point of being an apostle doesn’t apply to us, for apostleship in its strictest sense was a 1st Century appointment. But in vs. 6, Paul says to his readers, “And you also are among those called to belong to Jesus Christ.” When Paul says this, he’s saying, “What happened in my life applies to you as well.” So he’s saying, “You too receive God’s grace. And you too are called by God to be his servants – you too receive His appointment.

In the same way Paul received an appointment from God, when you receive God’s grace, you also receive an appointment. To be a Christian is more than being saved from sin; it is being appointed for His glory (Eph. 2:10). When you meet Jesus – truly meet Him – God has a plan for you by which you are to bring honor and glory to Him (1 Cor. 12:27, “You are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.”)

So let’s unpack this in terms of what it means for us today:

- **If you have met Jesus, then you are appointed to godly living.** Paul’s message was one of the “obedience that comes from faith.” (NIV correct here). Col. 3:5 says, “Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature...” Col. 3:12 says, “Cloth yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience...”
- **If you have met Jesus, then you are appointed to Christian service.** Vs. 5 – “grace and apostleship” – God has a plan for you to glorify Him. That plan was set out by the Lord before time began, and it was put into operation when you received God’s grace. In Romans 12 we will read how we all receive spiritual gifts in order to fulfill this appointment. But for now we need to know that embracing this appointment is part of the change that takes place when we receive the grace of God.

Conclusion: But this is what happens when you meet the Lord, when you have a significant relationship with Him. You receive God’s grace, covering your sin and bringing you into a personal relationship with the Lord who loves you. And you receive God’s appointment to serve Him through godly living and faithful service.

Now the order here is significant. The grace comes first. But if the grace is present, the appointment will be there too.

God’s desire for us, I believe, is that we rejoice in His grace and embrace our appointment. If you have, and you see these things clearly in your life, at least to a degree, then you can be confident of your relationship with the Lord. As I said in the beginning, you are growing...

But what if you are not? What if these are not evident in your life? Well, it could be that you have great confidence in having received God’s grace, but you are struggling with the appointment ... (babe in Christ or rebel...)

On the other hand, your problem could be with the grace...