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Key Verse: Romans 1: 1-7
Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures, the gospel concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and was declared to be Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness by resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the gentiles for the sake of his name, including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ,

To all God's beloved in Rome, who are called to be saints:
Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Reflection:
When I think about the book of Romans, I don't first think about big biblical stories. Not the ones that I remember from Sunday School at least. I actually think about my grandmother.

We all called her "Nanny." She served in almost every role at her small Lutheran church outside of Pittsburgh until it closed around 2010. I remember going with her on Saturdays to help set up for Sunday. Straightening up where it was needed. Prepping for the communion service the next day. Making sure everything was ready. She didn't just attend that church — she loved it. And watching her love that little congregation shaped my faith in ways I didn't fully understand at the time.

Nanny loved the book of Romans. I remember asking her once, "Why Romans, Nan? What makes that one so special?"

She said it was because Paul felt so ***relatable***. The way he talked to people. The way he prayed for them. She told me, "It's just like he's having a conversation with you and praying with you."

When I read Romans 1:1–7 now, I see what she meant.

Paul starts by introducing himself, but he doesn't lead with titles or accomplishments. He says he's a servant. He says he was called and was set apart. He puts himself on the same level as the people he's writing to. He belongs to Christ — just like they do. Period.

There's something simple and deeply grounding about that sentiment.

He reminds them that they are called to belong to Jesus too. Not called to impress. Not called to earn status. Just called to belong.

And then he talks about grace — grace that was promised long ago in Scripture and now fulfilled in God's son. Grace that isn't earned or based on power or position. Grace that is given freely.
That's relatable. That's comforting.

Because most of us live in a world that measures everything — success, influence, productivity. Paul points to something different. He says your identity isn't in your status. It's in Christ. The grace and promise is real.
Out of curiosity (and because I'm a bit of a history nerd - okay, a really big history nerd), I looked up what was happening in Rome when Paul wrote this letter. And surprise — there was a lot of turmoil. Political tension and communities that were culturally divided. Christians trying to live faithfully in a society that didn't reflect their values and the heart of what Jesus is really about.

Sound familiar? It does for me. 😀

The believers in Rome weren't living in peaceful, easy times. They were trying to follow Jesus in a complicated and changing world.

So Paul starts by comforting them:
You belong.
You are loved.
Grace has come just as it was promised.

He sounds like someone who understands. Someone walking with them and someone who is praying for them.
And when I think about Nanny sitting in that small church, loving her people and loving this book, I understand why Romans meant so much to her.

It feels steady. It feels honest. It feels like someone reminding you who you are when everything around you feels uncertain.

Just like she said — it's like Paul is sitting across the table, talking with you, praying with you, reminding you:
You belong to Christ. Grace is real and God keeps his promises. And even in messy times, you're not alone.

The Prayer:
In a world that measures status and success, ground us in the simple truth of Your grace.

Help us serve with relatable hearts, like Paul. Help us love Your church, like Nanny did. When the world feels unsettled, give us steady faith and real peace.

Thank You that Your promises are true, Your grace is enough, and we are never alone.
Amen.

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