



Romans 1:1-7 (ESV)

1 Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, 2 which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, 3 concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh 4 and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, 5 through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations, 6 including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ,

7 To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Romans 1:1-7 (HCSB)

1 Paul, a slave of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle and singled out for God's good news— 2 which He promised long ago through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures— 3 concerning His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who was a descendant of David according to the flesh 4 and who has been declared to be the powerful Son of God by the resurrection from the dead according to the Spirit of holiness. 5 We have received grace and apostleship through Him to bring about the obedience of faith among all the nations, on behalf of His name, 6 including yourselves who also belong to Jesus Christ by calling:

7 To all who are in Rome, loved by God, called as saints. Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

English Standard Version Bible - *Study Bible*¹

Romans 1:1-7

1:1-17 *The Gospel as the Revelation of the Righteousness of God.* In this first main section, Paul includes his opening salutation ([vv. 1-7](#)), thanksgiving ([vv. 8-15](#)), and his statement of the overall theme of Romans ([vv. 16-17](#)).

1:1-7 *Salutation: The Gospel Concerning God's Son.* This is the longest introduction of any of Paul's letters. Paul goes into more detail here because he had never been to Rome and he wanted to summarize his gospel for the Roman readers. One remarkable feature of this section is that many of the themes mentioned here also conclude the letter in the final doxology ([16:25-27](#)): (1) Paul's apostolic authority; (2) the fulfillment of the OT Scriptures in the gospel; (3) the gospel that centers on Jesus Christ; (4) the obedience of faith; (5) the mission to the Gentiles; and (6) the glory of Jesus Christ and God the Father.

Same Themes in Salutation and Doxology of Romans

Salutation	Key Themes	Doxology
1:1	Gospel	16:25
1:3	Son	16:25
1:2	Scriptures	16:26
1:1, 5	Paul/my gospel	16:25
1:5	Obedience of faith among the Gentiles	16:26
1:5	For his name/glory forever	16:27

1:1 **servant.** See note on the first-century institution of “bondservant” (Gk. *doulos*, “servant, slave, bondservant”) at [1 Cor. 7:21](#). This designation indicates that Paul is a slave of Christ, but at the same time the title recalls the honored servants of God in the OT, such as Moses, Joshua, David, and the prophets ([Josh. 14:7](#); [24:29](#); [2 Kings 17:23](#); [Ps. 89:3](#)). **Apostle** emphasizes that Paul's authority is equal to that of the 12 apostles chosen by Christ. The apostles were specifically called by Christ ([Matt. 10:1-7](#); [Acts 1:24-26](#); [Gal. 1:1](#)) and had seen the risen Lord Jesus ([Acts 1:22](#); [1 Cor. 9:1](#); [15:7-9](#)). They established and governed the whole church, under Jesus Christ, and they had authority to speak and write the words of God, equal in authority to the OT Scriptures ([1 Cor. 14:37](#); [2 Cor. 13:3](#); [Gal. 1:8-9](#); [1 Thess. 2:13](#); [4:15](#); [2 Pet. 3:2](#), [15-16](#)). Paul was called to be an apostle when Jesus appeared to him on the Damascus road ([Acts 9](#); [22](#); [26](#); [1 Cor. 9:1](#); [15:8-9](#); [Gal. 1:13-17](#)), and the unusual timing of his call led Paul to conclude that no more apostles would be chosen after him ([1 Cor. 15:8](#)).

Gospel (Gk. *euangelion*) means “good news.” This included not just a call to initial saving faith but Paul's entire message about Jesus Christ and how Christ's saving activity transforms all of life and all of history.

1. Lane T. Dennis, ed., *ESV Study Bible, The: English Standard Version*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Bibles, 2008), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: “Romans 1”.

1:2-3 Jesus fulfilled the OT prophecy that a descendant of **David** would rule forever, and hence he is the Messiah (see [2 Sam. 7:12-16](#); [Psalm 89: 132](#); [Isa. 11:1-5](#); [Jer. 23:5-6](#); [Ezek. 34:23-24](#)). The eternal Son of God assumed humanity to become the messianic King.

1:4 Jesus was **declared** by God the Father to be **the Son of God in power** when he was raised from the dead (see [Matt. 28:6](#)) and installed at God's right hand as the messianic King. As the eternal Son of God, he has reigned forever with the Father and the Holy Spirit. But this verse refers to Jesus as the God-man reigning in messianic power ("Son of God" was a Jewish title for the Messiah), and this reign began (i.e., was declared or initiated) at a certain point in salvation history, i.e., when Jesus was raised from the dead through the Holy Spirit. **according to the Spirit of holiness**. Christ's great power is always connected to the holiness of the Holy Spirit as he works in the new covenant age.

1:5 Paul's mission is to all people groups. His goal is **to bring about the obedience of faith** (cf. [16:26](#)). Obedience is required, but it is an obedience that flows from saving faith and is always connected to ongoing faith. Although Paul can speak of people's initial response as obeying the gospel ([10:16](#)), it is unlikely that "obedience of faith" here refers only to initial saving faith, because the purpose of Paul's apostleship was not merely to bring people to conversion but also to bring about transformed lives that were consistently obedient to God. Paul's ultimate goal in preaching to the Gentiles is **for the sake of his name**, that is, that Jesus Christ will be glorified. "Name" here means reputation or honor.

1:7 Rome. See [Introduction: The Ancient City of Rome](#). **loved by God and called**. God shows his love by effectually calling his people to himself. **Saints** refers to all Christians; all believers stand before God as his "holy ones." **Grace** means God's unmerited favor. **Peace** is not just the absence of conflict but echoes the OT concept of *shalom*, where a person's life with God and with everything else is in ordered harmony, both physically and spiritually, and "all is well."

Holman Christian Standard Bible - *Study Bible*²

Romans 1:1-7

1:1 Paul calls himself a slave. The Greek word *doulos* is mistranslated in most Bibles as "servant" or "bond servant." A slave was owned, was bought for a price, received no wages, and could not quit. A servant could quit, got paid, and was a free person. Jesus Himself took the form of a slave (Php 2:7), and Paul reminded Christians that "you are not your own, for you were bought at a price" (1Co 6:19b-20). Paul was an apostle by the call **1:1** Paul calls himself a **slave**. The Greek word *doulos* is mistranslated in most Bibles as "servant" or "bond servant." A slave was owned, was bought for a price, received no wages, and could not quit. A servant could quit, got paid, and was a free person. Jesus Himself took the form of a slave (Php 2:7), and Paul reminded Christians that "you are not your own, for you were bought at a price" (1Co 6:19b-20). Paul was **an apostle** by the call of God. In God's summons of Paul from his previous way of life, He commissioned him as an apostle (Ac 9). "Gospel" is an old English word meaning **God's good news**. Paul had been assigned by God to proclaim and teach this good news about Jesus.

1:2 The good news is the fulfillment of the OT prophecies, and the OT is not correctly understood apart from the NT.

1:3 Jesus is God's **Son** in a different sense than are Christians, who are called "sons" due to spiritual new birth (Jn 3) and adoption into God's family (Rm 8:15). Jesus is God's Son first by being the eternal Son and Second Person of the Trinity (Isa 9:6; Gal 4:4), and second by being the virgin-born incarnate Son, conceived as the Spirit came to Mary (Lk 1:35). Jesus was also the messianic Son who came in the family line of David (2Sam 7:12-16; Ps 2:6-7; 89:26-29,36). **Flesh** here means the real human nature of Jesus.

1:4 Jesus in His humiliation was despised and rejected (Isa 53:2) and had the form of a slave (Php 2:7). He spoke as the Son of the Father (Jn 5:19-23), but He was persecuted because "He was even calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God" (Jn 5:18). At the cross, His sonship was called into question (Mt 27:39-43). But the **Spirit of holiness** (another title for the Holy Spirit) raised Jesus from the **dead**. This event set Him apart as God's unique Son exalted over death and Satan, and invested with all power (Mt 28:18).

1:5 The **obedience of faith** (cp. 10:16; 15:18) is best understood as the faith that issues in obedience. Paul's ministry sought to bring **all the nations** to obey Jesus and His Father.

1:6 Christians belong to Jesus **by calling**. This calling is not a bare invitation. It is instead a sovereign summons that results in salvation as people respond in faith to God's summons. By this language Paul reminded the Roman believers that God took the initiative in saving them.

1:7 **Called as saints** does not mean called "to be" saints, as if this is something Christians might become in the future. Neither does it signify an honorary title or an unusually holy person. Rather, all Christians are saints by the sovereign call of God. They have been set apart just as the nation of Israel was set apart (Lv 11:44; 19:2). A Christian is a person who has the forgiveness of sins and is sanctified by faith in Jesus (Ac 26:18) and therefore is a "saint" (1Co 1:2). The Christian belongs to Jesus and is set apart from the world.

2. Jeremy Royal Howard, ed., HCSB Study Bible, (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2010), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "Romans 1".

NLT Life Application Study Bible³

Romans 1:1-7

1:1 Paul wrote this letter to the church in Rome. Neither he nor the other church leaders, James and Peter, had yet been to Rome. Most likely, the Roman church had been established by believers who had been at Jerusalem for Pentecost ([Acts 2:10](#)) and by travelers who had heard the Good News in other places and had brought it back to Rome (for example, Priscilla and Aquila, [Acts 18:2](#); [Romans 16:3-5](#)). Paul wrote the letter to the Romans during his ministry in Corinth (at the end of his third missionary journey just before returning to Jerusalem—[Acts 20:3](#); [Romans 15:25](#)) to encourage the believers and to express his desire to visit them someday (within three years he would). The Roman church had no New Testament because the Gospels were not yet being circulated in their final written form. Thus, this letter may well have been the first piece of Christian literature the Roman believers had seen. Written to both Jewish and Gentile Christians, the letter to the Romans is a systematic presentation of the Christian faith.

1:1 When Paul, a devout Jew who had at first persecuted the Christians, became a believer, God used him to spread the Good News throughout the world. Although he was a prisoner, Paul did eventually preach in Rome ([Acts 28](#)), perhaps even to Caesar himself. Paul's Profile is found in [Acts 9](#), p. 1837.

1:1 Paul humbly calls himself a slave of Christ Jesus and an apostle ("one who is sent"). For a Roman citizen—which Paul was—to choose to be a slave was unthinkable. But Paul chose to be completely dependent on and obedient to his beloved Master. What is your attitude toward Christ, your Master? Our willingness to serve and obey Jesus Christ enables us to be useful and usable servants to do work for him—work that really matters. Obedience begins as we renounce other masters, identify ourselves with Jesus, discover his will and live according to it, and consciously turn away from conflicting interests, even if these interests have been important to us in the past.

1:2 Some of the prophecies predicting the Good News regarding Jesus Christ are found in [Genesis 12:3](#); [Psalms 16:10](#); [40:6-10](#); [118:22](#); [Isaiah 11:1ff](#); [Zechariah 9:9-11](#); [12:10](#); [Malachi 4:1-6](#).

1:3, 4 Paul states that Jesus is the Son of God, the promised Messiah, and the resurrected Lord. Paul calls Jesus a descendant of King David to emphasize that Jesus truly had fulfilled the Old Testament Scriptures predicting that the Messiah would come from David's line. With this statement of faith, Paul declares his agreement with the teaching of all Scripture and of the apostles.

1:3-5 Here Paul summarizes the Good News about Jesus Christ, who (1) came as a human by natural descent, (2) was part of the Jewish royal line through David, (3) died and was raised from the dead, and (4) opened the door for God's grace and kindness to be poured out on us. The book of Romans is an expansion of these themes.

1:5 Christians have both a privilege and a great responsibility. Paul and the apostles received the privilege of being called, but they also received the authority and the responsibility to share with others what God has done. God also graciously forgives our sins when we believe in him as Lord. In doing this, we are committing ourselves to begin a new life. Paul's new life also involved a God-given responsibility: to witness about God's Good News to the world as a missionary. God may or may not call you to be a foreign missionary, but he does call you (and all believers) to be Christ's ambassador and to witness to the changed life that Jesus Christ has begun in you.

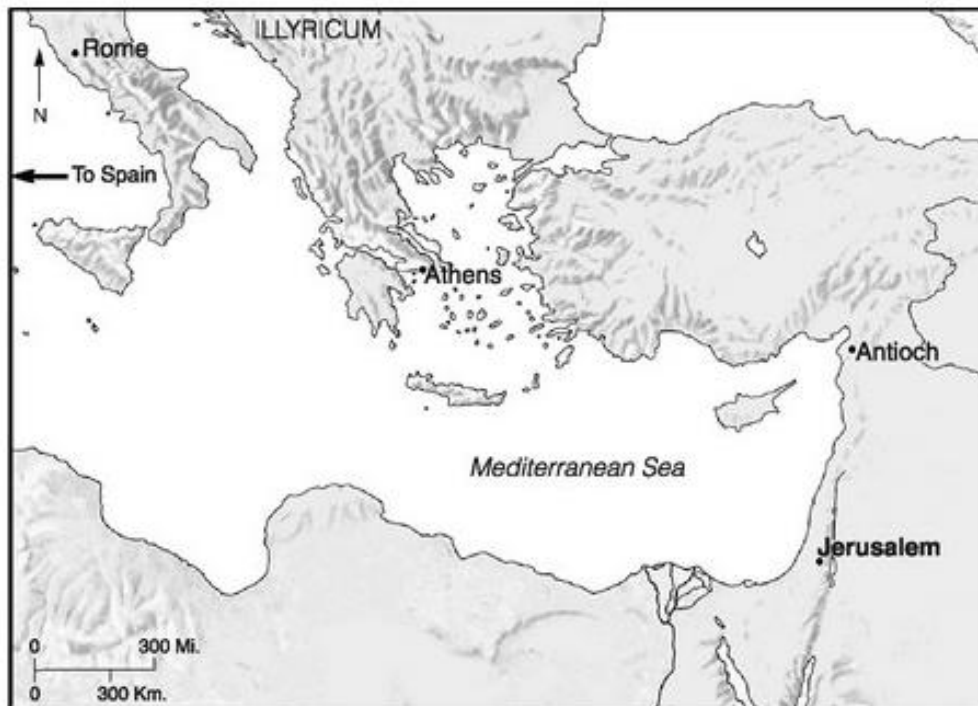
3. *Life Application Study Bible*, (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1988), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 1892-1893.

1:6 Jews and Christians alike stood against the idolatrous Roman religions, and Roman officials often confused the two groups. This was especially easy to do since the Christian church in Rome could have been originally composed of Jewish converts who had attended Pentecost in Jerusalem (see [Acts 2:1ff](#)). By the time Paul wrote this letter to the Romans, however, many Gentiles had joined the church. The Jews and the Gentiles needed to know the relationship between Judaism and Christianity.

1:6, 7 Paul says that those who become Christians are invited by Jesus Christ to (1) belong to God's family, and (2) be his very own people. What a wonderful expression of what it means to be a Christian! In being reborn into God's family we have the greatest experience of love and the greatest inheritance. Because of all that God has done for us, we strive to be his holy people.

1:7 Rome was the capital of the Roman Empire that had spread over most of Europe, North Africa, and the Near East. In New Testament times, Rome was experiencing a golden age. The city was wealthy, literary, and artistic. It was a cultural center, but it was also morally decadent. The Romans worshiped many pagan gods, and even some of the emperors were worshiped. In stark contrast to the Romans, the followers of Christ believed in only one God and lived by his high moral standards.

MpChristianity was also at odds with the Romans' dependence on military strength. Many Romans were naively pragmatic, believing that any means to accomplish the intended task was good. And for them, nothing worked better than physical might. The Romans trusted in their strong military power to protect them against all enemies. Christians in every age need to be reminded that God is the only permanent source of our security and salvation, and at the same time he is "our Father"!



The Gospel Goes to Rome

When Paul wrote his letter to the church in Rome, he had not yet been there, but he had taken the gospel "from Jerusalem all the way to Illyricum" ([15:19](#)). He planned to visit and preach in Rome one day and hoped to continue to take the gospel farther west—even to Spain.

Life Application Concise New Testament Commentary⁴

Greetings from Paul / [1:1-7](#)

Paul opens his letter to these Roman believers, most of whom he had never met, by explaining who he is and what his credentials are. Almost immediately, he directs their attention to the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul knew that the resurrected Christ was the most important common denominator for him and the believers in Rome. From that common ground he introduces his plan to visit them and then plunges into one of the most detailed explanations of the Christian faith found in the Bible.

1:1 Paul had friends in Rome, as [Romans 16](#) shows, but he had not personally visited that church. So he begins his letter by formally presenting his credentials. He first calls himself **Christ's slave**, meaning one who is subject to the will and wholly at the disposal of his master. Paul, in using the term, expresses his absolute devotion and subjection to Christ Jesus. For a Roman citizen to identify himself as a servant was unthinkable. Paul could have introduced himself to these Romans as a Roman citizen, but instead he chose to speak of himself only as completely dependent on and obedient to his beloved Master.

Paul then notes two important roles to characterize his life. Paul was **chosen by God to be an apostle** and **sent out to preach his Good News**. His calling occurred when he saw the Lord Jesus on the road to Damascus ([Acts 9:1-19](#)). His assignment was to teach the Good News of salvation—especially “to the Gentiles” ([Galatians 1:16](#)).

The title “apostle” designated authority to set up and supervise churches and discipline them if necessary. Even more than a title of authority, apostle means one sent on a mission, like an envoy or an ambassador. Paul represents himself with the credentials and responsibilities given to him by the King of kings as an ambassador to evangelize the Gentile world.

1:2 The **Good News** had been **promised long ago by God** and was not a new religion made up by Paul or anyone else. It was rooted in God's promises in the Old Testament to his people **through his prophets**. The gospel that Paul preached was in perfect continuity with God's earlier words in the Scriptures to his people, Israel. Both the Jews and Gentiles in the church of Rome needed to be reminded that the gospel is an ancient message of God's plan for his creation. This was on Paul's mind and is a recurring theme throughout the letter.

Even though the church in Rome consisted mostly of Gentiles and former converts to the Jewish faith, Paul reminded them all that, in their acceptance of the gospel, they were not casting off **the holy Scriptures** in order to embrace Jesus as the Christ. Rather, they were discovering and responding to the outworking of God's eternal plan. The prophets in the Old Testament announced the coming fulfillment of God's grace in Christ.

1:3 After introducing the messenger (himself), the message (gospel), and the source (God), Paul turns to the subject of the message. In [verses 3-5](#), Paul summarizes the **Good News** about Jesus Christ. The central focus of the gospel is **Jesus, God's Son**, who was both human and divine (see [Luke 3:31](#); [2 Timothy 2:8](#)). Jesus was **born into King David's royal family line**, in Bethlehem, and of David's tribe (Judah). King David was promised a kingdom without end ([2 Samuel 7:12-16](#)). In the birth of Jesus Christ, the eternal King of kings, that promise was fulfilled.

4. Barton B. Bruce et al., *Life Application New Testament Commentary*, (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 2001), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 578-580.

In Christ's humanity we see his identification with us and his excellence as our example. In Christ's divinity we see his worthiness to take our place in receiving the punishment for sin that is due us. We separate Christ's human and divine natures for understanding and discussion, but in fact, they cannot be separated. Jesus is and will always be the God-man, our Lord and Savior.

1:4 Jesus' entire life, from his human conception to his resurrection, was planned, promised, and fulfilled by God. His nature as God's Son was made clear **when God powerfully raised him from the dead by means of the Holy Spirit**. He was, is, and will always be the Son of God. Christ's resurrection unmistakably revealed that truth to the world. At the time of his resurrection, Christ was glorified and restored to his full rights and status as Son of God in power ([Philippians 2:4-9](#)).

1:5 Christians have both **privilege** and **authority**. Paul and the apostles received forgiveness (grace) as an undeserved privilege. But they also were given the authority to share the message of God's forgiveness with others. God also graciously forgives our sins when we repent and put our trust in Christ. In doing this, we are committing ourselves to begin a new life. God's call may take many forms and many directions, but he does call each believer to be an example of the changed life that Jesus Christ has begun and to spread the word.

In Paul's case, God's direction became very clear. He was **to tell Gentiles everywhere what God has done for them** ([Acts 9:15](#)). Paul did carry the Good News across the known world, speaking in synagogues, convincing the Gentiles, and even standing before kings. Paul understood his calling, for in [Romans 11:13](#) he states, "God has appointed me as the apostle to the Gentiles." Paul makes it clear that the gospel is the working out of God's plan first revealed to the Jews. He also makes it clear that the gospel offered hope to the Gentiles.

The desired response to the gospel message was that people **will believe and obey him, bringing glory to his name**. Faith and obedience are inseparable. Real faith will always lead to obedience; real obedience comes from faith.

1:6-7 Having stated the scope of his ministry, Paul goes on to include the believers **in Rome** in God's plan. These believers may not have been called as apostles, as Paul was, but they certainly had been **called to belong to Jesus Christ**, to be **his very own people**. Paul was reminding the Romans that the message of the gospel is larger than its messengers. Even though he had not been able to visit them personally, he was fully aware that they were among those God had intended to reach. The reality of this invitation rests on the truth that **God loves people dearly**. Before believers are called, they are loved.

The church in Rome was primarily made up of Gentiles ([1:5-6](#), [13](#); [11:13](#); [15:15-16](#)), although there were a number of Jewish Christians as well. Part of the church may have been Jews who became believers at Pentecost and returned to Rome with the Good News. [Acts 2:10-11](#) states that among the great crowd in Jerusalem who heard Peter's speech were "visitors from Rome (both Jews and converts to Judaism)." In addition, travelers who had heard the Good News in other places brought it back to Rome (for example, Priscilla and Aquila—[Acts 18:2](#); [Romans 16:3-5](#)).

Grace is the unmerited favor God gives to the believers; **peace** refers to the peace that Christ made between us and God through his death on the cross. Only God can grant such wonderful gifts. Paul wants his readers to experience God's grace and peace in their daily living. In these two words of greeting Paul is combining expressions from Jewish and Gentile customs. Jews wished each other peace (*eirene* or the Hebrew *shalom*); Gentiles wished each other grace (*charis*). Each of these common expressions gained considerable value in Christian use.

Study and Discussion Questions



Introduction - [Romans 1:1-7](#)

Topics: [Affirmation](#), [Ambassadors](#), [Call](#), [Witnessing](#)

Open It

1. What are some of the normal ways people begin a letter or a phone call?
2. When have you been startled by the opening paragraph of a letter?
3. *If you were writing the initial letter to a pen pal, how would you introduce yourself?

Explore It

4. *How did Paul introduce and identify himself to the Romans? ([1:1](#))
5. What special calling on his life did Paul feel? ([1:1](#))
6. In what ways has God revealed His gospel to people? ([1:2-4](#))
7. Who is the focus of God's gospel? ([1:2-4](#))
8. What credentials does Jesus have to confirm His claim as Son of God? ([1:3-4](#))
9. *What did Paul and others receive as a calling for their lives? ([1:5](#))
10. Who were the new group of people being exposed to the gospel message? ([1:5](#))
11. What were the Gentiles and all people being called to believe? ([1:5](#))
12. How did Paul describe the people who were receiving this letter? ([1:6](#))
13. To whom was this letter written? ([1:7](#))
14. *What kind of greeting did Paul send to his audience? ([1:7](#))

Get It

15. *In what way do you feel God has placed a special calling on your life?
16. What purpose for living has God given you?
17. *What words do you use to describe yourself to others as a follower of Jesus Christ?
18. How did you feel when you realized God's gospel was meaningful to you?
19. What do most people today believe about God's plan for the world?
20. What do most people today believe about God's plan for their personal salvation?
21. How have your beliefs about Jesus Christ changed during the various stages of your life?
22. In what ways would remembering in prayer each day God's calling on and plan for your life affect your daily walk with Christ?

Apply It

23. With whom could you share God's unfolding plan of salvation for the whole world?
24. How would you explain God's plan of salvation to a friend?
25. *To what friend could you explain God's love and your response to His plan of salvation? How?