

January 31, 2021 - David Baumgartner

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 31 January 2021

Preacher: David Baumgartner

[0:00] We welcome you to the media ministry of Bethel Community Church, knowing Jesus, making Jesus known. All right, boy, it is good to be here.

It really is in so many ways. So good to see you all today. As you know, we started a new series last week, Paul's letter to the Christians living in Rome.

So I hope you brought your Bibles. If you please turn with me to Romans chapter 1. Paul went on these missionary journeys, and while doing so, we know that he wrote these letters to various people and to various churches.

We actually have 13 of Paul's letters. Last week, of course, we were introduced to Romans, mostly some background information about Rome and so on, but particularly why I believe Paul wrote this letter.

This morning, we're going to be getting into the actual text of Romans. So we'll be looking at only one sentence, just one. It's called the greetings, or maybe some of you heard the salutation.

[1:12] But friends, even though it's only one sentence, it's seven verses long. So in fact, it's the longest greeting that Paul writes in all of his letters.

And as we'll see, I believe it really sets the tone for the rest of this book. So Paul, he starts out here by describing, we'll see, three things.

He's going to talk about himself. Secondly, he's going to talk about his ministry. And third, he's going to talk about the message of his ministry. Let's go ahead and first go to the Lord and read his word, beginning in verse 1 of chapter 1.

Paul, a bondservant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures.

Concerning his son, who was born of a descendant of David, according to the flesh, who was declared the son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ, our Lord, through whom we have received grace and apostleship, to bring about the obedience of faith among the Gentiles for his name's sake, among whom also you are called of Jesus Christ.

[2:38] To all who are beloved of God in Rome, called as saints, grace to you and peace from our God, our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen. Let's go ahead and pray. Father, we are so grateful that once again we can be here today and to be refreshed by your word, Lord, how important it is to us. We desire to live according to your word because, Lord, truth comes from you.

How else can we live in this world? How else can we navigate through the things that we see in life, the things that we experience in life? Without you, Lord, we would be lost.

But, Father, we thank you for the grace that you've given us through the ministry of your written word and also through the power of your spirit, Lord, who makes your word come alive to us. May these words that were written some 2,000 years ago apply to us today, Lord.

May we see that. May we embrace it as something that you have done for us. And we ask for this grace in Jesus' name. Amen. So Paul is writing to this church here that he had not founded, nor had he ever visited.

[3:51] And he knows some of the believers we saw last week, but he doesn't know all of them. I want to ask you, how will Paul introduce himself to these people? Well, let's go ahead and look again.

Verse 1. Paul. He says he's a bondservant of Christ Jesus. The original word there in the Greek text is actually slave.

He's a doulos. Being a slave in the first century is not something that you would brag about. In fact, you would be looked down upon. And that's because you became a slave either through one of several things.

First, perhaps you were defeated in battle. And instead of being killed, you become a slave. Or secondly, perhaps you couldn't pay your debts.

And so you had to sell yourself into slavery. Or a third thing is just you were born into a family of such. A family of slaves. So you can think of it as a generational thing.

[4:53] But Paul doesn't seem to be hindered by the opinions of others. No, he saw himself as a willing slave of Christ. And this is why most of our English translations change that word from slave to bondservant.

Did you notice that? He's a bondservant. And that's to convey the idea that Paul was a slave by choice. His choice.

And this concept is actually rooted back in the Old Testament. In far as the context, the giving of the law. And they were talking about the releasing of people from slaves.

From slavery. In Exodus chapter 21, it says, get this. For instance, consider if a slave's debt had been paid. Listen to what Moses says.

If a slave plainly says, I love my master, my wife, and my children. I will not go out as a free man. Then, here's what happens. Then the master shall bring him to God.

[5:58] Then he shall bring him to the door or the door post. And his master shall pierce his ear with an awl. And he shall serve him permanently. Now, Paul doesn't ever talk about having pierced ears or anything.

But I think the case here, nonetheless, is that he was grateful to God for all that he had done. For Paul, it is an honor to be called a slave for Christ.

And I think claiming to be God's slave also would place him in good company. If you consider Moses, Joshua, Abraham, King David, some of the prophets, they also referred to themselves as slaves for God.

But notice, Paul is a slave for Christ Jesus. And this is to remind his readers that his relationship to God is through none other than Christ Jesus himself.

And what a profound thing to say, friends, that we relate to the Father through Christ Jesus. And we learn that there's a freedom that comes to those who claim to be slaves, that comes to those who are bond servants to Christ.

[7:13] And it's a freedom that the world, the unbelievers of the world do not understand. It's because it's a freedom that they do not have.

But because of Jesus, if you are a believer, you are free. Amen. You're free. You're free, the scripture tells us, from the penalty of sin.

Think of the lake of fire. You're also free from the power of sin. Believers can resist sin. We have the power to resist it through the Spirit.

And one day, we will be free from the presence of sin. And that's referring to our eternal state, when we will not have any sin around us anymore.

These are just a few of the benefits that we enjoy as believers in Jesus Christ. In Romans chapter 6, verse 22, if you turn with me there, just a couple chapters ahead, Romans 6, 22, get this.

[8:15] He says, having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification and the outcome, eternal life.

I think it's really good for us to remind ourselves of all the blessings and the benefits that we enjoy because of Christ Jesus.

Well, Paul saw himself as a slave for Christ Jesus, but he goes on here in verse 1. Notice, he's called as an apostle. Now, here Paul begins to describe the second thing in this letter, in these opening verses, his ministry.

You may know that in the early days of the church, there was a group of men known as apostles. They were the ones who were sent by Jesus. And here and elsewhere, Paul actually says that he too is an apostle.

Now, if you know anything about Paul, I would say that he's the last person that you would expect to fill those shoes. He was. And you know what? He would agree with you.

[9:26] And that's because in his first letter to the Corinthians, he says, I am the least of the apostles, whom I am not fit to be called an apostle. But why would he say that?

He says, because I persecuted the church of God. Well, how did Paul come to have this title, apostle? Notice here in verse 1, here's how.

He says, he was called to be an apostle. You know, it's interesting in the New Testament, when you see that word calling, do you know it's almost always referring to the work of God, where he calls people, his elect, that is, unto salvation?

This is known as the effectual call. It's where God does it. And he calls us. If you want an example, please turn to me with Romans 8.

Here's a verse that I think all of us probably know by heart. In verse 28 of chapter 8. Listen to this. Now look at this.

[10:37] Verse 29. There's a whole string of things that God does.

What a wonderful thing that God does that. And we can see that calling there, just right in there. But the point here that Paul wants to make is he wants the Roman believers to know that he did not appoint himself to be an apostle.

No, he was an apostle because God decided it. God sought him out. You all know the story in Acts. In 33 AD, Saul was on the road to Damascus. He's going to persecute believers. But God interrupted his life. And he got Paul's attention. He knocked him off his horse.

He blinded him for a while. And then the Lord sends this guy named Ananias to go fetch Paul. But Ananias, he's afraid of Paul. But look at what in Acts 9.

[12:03] This is what the Lord says to Ananias. The Lord said to Ananias, go for he. He's talking about Paul. Is, get this. A chosen instrument of mine.

To bear my name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel. For I will show him how much he must suffer for my name's sake.

So here we see Paul as the apostle to the Gentiles. So God's doing. And boy, Paul suffered. But he did it for a reason.

In verse 1 he says he was called as an apostle. And here's why. He was set apart for the gospel of God. If you put all of this together, friends.

This seems to suggest here that Paul's conversion was to serve a higher purpose. What an interesting way to think about that.

[13:05] It is interesting. At one time, Saul, that is, he used to be Saul. He was a Pharisee. That word Pharisee, it actually means those set apart to study the law.

And now here he's saying he set apart. Not to the law. He set apart for the gospel. It's the gospel. We just sang about it. It's the good news.

Good news out there. Paul was distinct from the other apostles, though. He was. He did not travel around the countryside with Jesus as the others did.

Nor did he grow up in Palestine. No, Paul was born in a city of Tarsus, Cilicia. And that's modern day Turkey.

Tarsus is a very busy city. Very rich in cultural and commercial diversity. Here's the key thing to know. Paul is the only apostle who grew up under the influence of Hellenism.

[14:09] I'm talking about the Greek way of thinking. Paul was a Hellenistic Jew. Now, that doesn't mean that he would have mixed with the Gentiles.

No, but from his youth, he would have been exposed to the Gentile customs and the Gentile ways of thinking. It really makes sense looking back and to see why God would commission Paul as the apostle to the Gentiles.

God had been shaping him for his ministry for his whole life. You know, it just makes you think about how God has a part, a job for all of us.

How has he been shaping each one of us for our ministry? It is a privilege to seek that out. To seek out how God would use each one of us.

How he has shaping us and has shaped us for the ministry he has for us. In Paul's second letter to Timothy, you don't have to turn there, but it's in chapter 1, verses 8 and 9.

[15:13] This is what Paul says to Timothy. What great thoughts about that calling there.

Well, Paul brings up this matter about the gospel. What about this gospel? Well, this is a key topic of this whole letter here. This is the third part of this.

Paul's message. What did Paul bring to the Gentiles? Well, Paul's going to tell them four things about this gospel. First, you might want to call these four truths.

First truth is this. It's from God. Yeah. That's the gospel of God. You may just wonder, are there other gospels out there?

You know, we might say yes. If you would, you can turn with me to Galatians chapter 1. I want to show you something here.

[16:29] Here's another well-known verse, I think, that we would say, talking about gospels. In chapter 1, verse 9 of the Galatians, he says, But even though we are an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed.

Yeah, well, it seems like there's other gospels out there. But look at the context of what he says. Look with me in verse 6. He says this. I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting him who called you by the grace of Christ for a different gospel.

But then in verse 7, here it comes, which is really not another gospel. Here's the reason. Only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ.

In other words, there are people out there who think they're sharing the good news of the gospel of Christ. But in reality, it is not the true gospel.

You want an example? Here, I wrote one down. God wants you to be wealthy all the time. He wants you to live your best life right now.

[17:51] Yeah, that's not the gospel. That's not God's gospel. That's man's gospel. And it's not true. There's only one gospel.

And where do you find it? It's found. God's word. That's where we find the gospel. Back to our passage here in Romans. The first truth about the message is that it's from God.

Secondly, about God's gospel was noticed. Promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures. In other words, God's gospel was promised ages ago in written form by the prophets.

This is what Paul says. I'm reminded here that right after Jesus rose from the grave, you know the account where he encounters these two travelers on the road to Emmaus?

It's in Luke 24. It's in Luke 24. They're struggling to know about Jesus and why he died. And then there's this point in verse 27. He says, What a great thing to know that all of the scriptures, every book of the Bible in some way points to Jesus Christ, our Lord.

[19:16] And so it's the gospel of God. And secondly, it's promised beforehand. Here's another truth. God's gospel, look with me, verse 3, is concerning or that is centered around his son.

Now we all know that. We do. In verse 3, he goes on. This son was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh.

Do you realize, and I know you do, that the second person of the Godhead, he existed with the Father and the Holy Spirit from all eternity past.

But friends, there was a day when that second person of the Godhead took on flesh. He became a man. We recently celebrated that.

The great truth that we can celebrate. And he came into this world, as he tells us, as a descendant from the line of King David. And this would not only fulfill Old Testament prophecy, it also would qualify Jesus as Messiah.

[20:25] Here, notice here in verse 4, this descendant of David. Notice, Paul says, he died. And he rose again by the power of the Spirit.

And proving, or that is, declaring him as the Son of God. Do you notice how the gospel is here? Who Jesus is? What he did? Paul doesn't miss a beat to get the gospel in there.

And this is just the first sentence of this book. Now, I want to ask you this. What did this Son's death and resurrection achieve for Paul?

What was that? He tells them. Here's the fourth truth. Verse 5. Through whom we have received grace and apostleship. In other words, through Christ's ministry, Paul and a few others here received grace and apostleship.

You might think of that as an assignment. Someone who was sent forth. Paul's referring here back to his commission. And you might want to ask, what's the purpose?

[21:32] Verse 5. To bring about the obedience of, in other words, that results from the faith among all the Gentiles. See, so there it is.

It's to bring about the obedience of faith among the Gentiles. And here's the purpose. For Christ's namesake.

That's amazing. It may come as a surprise. But Paul saw the ultimate reason for his mission to the Gentiles.

It was not for their salvation. No. It's for the glory of God. The glory of his name. What a very refreshing way to look at life.

For Paul, the spread of the gospel into unknown lands brought praise and glory to God. Later in this letter, we're going to learn that God chose Israel to be the people through whom his son would come.

[22:40] Secondly, we're going to learn that because of their unbelief, these, the Jews, were set aside. They were set aside. And now a great number of Gentiles are entering into that salvation.

What a great time that is. That includes those from Rome. He says, verse 6, among whom you also are called of Jesus Christ. Paul's assuring his readers they're part of this plan of God.

And so if you're a Gentile, this ought to be good news for you. Whether you're living in Rome.

Whether you're living in Spain. Whether you're living in Webster Groves.

Wherever. Another thing that we're going to learn in this letter. Here's a third truth. One day God will return his attention back to the Jews. And that's because as we'll see, all Israel will be saved.

What a great truth that is. But until then, friends. We're living in what's called the times of the Gentiles. And you and I have a part in that.

[23:53] It's a good time to ask, you know, again, what's our part? What is our part to play for you, for me, corporately as a body of believers? How will it go for us?

Will you and I depend? Will you and I be guided by God's word? Will we lay hold upon the gospel that's of Christ?

In the 14th century. I'm sorry. In the 18th century. The U.S. Congress issued a special edition of the Bible.

According to Thomas Jefferson. Yeah. I'm talking about the man. Thomas Jefferson.

He's an American statesman, diplomat, lawyer, architect, philosopher. And he's the founding father who served as the third president for our country.

[24:50] That's from 1801 to 1809. I want to ask you, what a great thing to have. A copy of the very Bible. That Thomas Jefferson carried around.

I looked on the website. CBD. 25 bucks. You can get a copy. Probably not autographed. But you can get a copy. Any takers?

No. No thanks. Thomas Jefferson. He loved religion. He loved politics. Did you know that he renounced his belief in the Trinity?

He denied Jesus' divinity as the Son of God. And he actually edited the Gospels. He went through. Get this. Eliminating all references to anything that was supernatural. Just wiped it out. I guess if he had a scissors or something, maybe he cut it out.

[25:49] Here's how his Bible ends in the Gospels. Listen to this. This is the ending. There laid they Jesus and rolled a great stone at the mouth of the sepulcher and departed.

That's it. End of story. Jesus died. And that's all. What can you say to such a guy that would edit the Bible?

Well, it's too late for Thomas Jefferson, but it's not in our day. Because the Gospel is not about religion. It's not about a political system.

It's not even about a particular church. It's concerning God's Son, Jesus Christ, and what he did for us. And through that, you and I can have hope, brothers and sisters.

Look at how Paul ends his greeting here. Verse 7. 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.

[26:57] So the believers there, they will need grace and peace. And friends, I think so do we. We really do. As the musicians come forward here, this letter from Paul, it actually may have been the first written form of teaching that the church in Rome had received at this point.

Isn't that amazing? What could they learn from it? What can we learn from it? Well, as we saw Paul introduce himself, notice, when we think of our relationship to God as being in Christ, that's good. That's the only way to see ourselves. And those who willingly serve the Lord out of gratitude for who he is and what he did, that too is a good way to see yourself.

And it really emphasizes just the point. Do we serve willingly? Are we ever, like, caught up by what other people think? You know, you do this because, yeah, other people are watching you.

It's not a good reason. It may be a good reason for unbelievers to see because, you know, we do want to have a righteousness that is, that's out there before the world.

[28:21] If you were here for Sunday school, you'd understand what I meant. But our righteousness comes from God. And so the Lord wants us to serve him out of delight, out of gratitude.

I need to ask myself, do I serve willingly? Or do I do it for show? Perhaps you need to ask that the same. We also saw Paul's ministry.

It's good for us to seek the Lord for what role, what ministry that he'd have for us. I am convinced, friends, that just through the scriptures here, that God has a plan for each one of us.

Each one of us who has been called, that is, saved, and have a relationship with God. He has a part for us to play. You might want to call it a commission, if you will.

Thirdly, we looked at Paul's message. The gospel. There's only one. Only one true gospel. And Jesus willingly gave his life. He took upon himself the sins, the penalty for our sins.

[29:31] And that's just a start, friends. Just consider all the benefits that we enjoy in Christ. Come on Sunday morning at 9 o'clock and share in the Lord's Supper.

And encourage one another with those things. The benefits that we enjoy in Christ Jesus. You know, and through him, we conquer the power of sin.

Through him, he's given us a great hope. A sure thing. That one day, and that one day we'll be relieved from the very presence of sin. But until then, he says, grace and peace is extended to all. All of us. Especially those who are willing to desire to engage in what God has for us. Just stand with me. Let's go to the Lord in prayer.

Heavenly Father, as we've looked at this introduction from Paul, we see how Paul chooses his words carefully.

[30:38] And that's because he's a master at communicating profound truths. Truths that we need to hear. Truths that we need to rely upon.

And we're just starting out here, Lord. Lord, we're thankful for the promises that we have from you. That you will never leave us nor forsake us.

The promises that we have that you will work in us the things that are pleasing to you. And at the end of our lives, Lord, the promise to be with you.

Lord, we thank you for all of this. May we be those who would seek out what you have for us. To not be satisfied with just the milk of the word. But, Lord, to go after the meat.

To go after what you have for us. That we can share you with others. And to give that answer to those who ask, Lord, for the reason of our hope.

[31:40] Lord, we thank you for this letter. May you be glorified as we study your word and live it out. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.