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2/3/08

## Romans 1:1-6 "The Good News Has Come"

This morning we are beginning an in depth study of the book of Romans. Of course, it is just about universally agreed that the apostle Paul was the author of this letter. I certainly believe he wrote this book under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. As Paul wrote this letter to the Romans, he clearly followed an outline as he set forth an organized presentation of the gospel that he had been preaching as an apostle and missionary. In chapters 1-3 he talks about our need for salvation due to our sin. The bad news is man is plagued with sin. Our sin nature leads to selfishness, broken relationships, guilt, sorrow, despair, and death. But then in chapters 3-5 Paul tells us the good news of how we are made right with God, and how we can enjoy the benefits of being right with God. Then in chapters 6-8 he talks about the doctrinal foundation of how to live the Christian life. He explains how it is possible to have victory over sin and please God. In chapters 9-11 he addresses the problem of unbelief in the nation of Israel, and God's plan to save Israel. Then in chapter 12 to the end of the book, Paul deals with the practical concerns of living the Christian life.

I cannot emphasize enough the importance of this book. It was largely the study of Romans that led Martin Luther to a salvation by faith experience, and he led the world into the Protestant Reformation. That certainly changed the course of western civilization. Learning the message of Romans has helped me in my Christian life.

Since this is such an important book of the Bible, I hope you will make a commitment to hear as many of these messages in Romans as possible. You will gain a strong doctrinal foundation for your Christian life. If you are not yet a Christian, the first part of this book, as well as chapter 10, will explain to you why you should become a Christian & how.

It is clear from the very beginning of this book that Paul's purpose is to present the gospel or "good news" of Jesus Christ. That's the theme of the book. Notice in the last of v.1 that Paul says he was "separated to the gospel of God." The book opens with a reference to the gospel. Good news refers to a message that makes the heart glad. We should rejoice in that fact that God has made a way of salvation. With so much bad news in the world, aren't you glad that God has some good news for us? What's really amazing is that fact that God has good news for us, even though we have sinned against Him time and time again. The only reason there is any good news from God is because of His love for us.

Not only is the gospel of Jesus Christ the theme of this book, it was the theme of Paul's ministry. The word "gospel" was used 4 times as frequently in the epistles of Paul as in all the other New Testament writings combined. So let's look beginning in v.1 and see several aspects of the good news of Jesus Christ. Paul share 4 truths about the gospel. First:

### I. THE GOOD NEWS OF SALVATION WAS PROMISED BY GOD

Yes, it is the gospel "of God." He is the originator of the gospel (subjective genitive), not Paul or anyone else. In v.2 Paul says that this gospel was first "promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures." So we see:

A. It Was Promised Long Ago – The gospel unto which he had been separated is not a message which broke brand new upon the world with the appearing of Christ and the apostles. Paul affirms in v.2, “which He promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures.” Paul and the others did not invent a new message. Rather, the gospel of the New Testament is a fulfillment of the promises found in the Old Testament. It is not out of continuity with the rest of Scripture. It isn’t simply a novel idea or a change in God’s strategy. It was promised long ago.

After Adam & Eve sinned, God began to promise that a Savior was coming in Genesis 3:15. Beginning in Genesis 12 God promised that the Savior would come through the seed of Abraham. As we shall see, God later promised the Messiah would come through the seed of King David. The promise of the gospel is thousands of years old. In fact, God determined He would send a Savior even before the world was created! (Rev. 13:8).

Of course, this gives credibility to the gospel message. If you will study the Scriptures, you will see the continuity between the Old Testament & the new. Furthermore, we see that:

B. The Promises of the Gospel Were Given by the Prophets & Recorded in Scripture – Notice that God gave the promise “through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures.” Just about all the prophets foretold of the Messiah, and the blessings He would bring. And their prophecies were written down in the pages of Holy Scripture. These writing of old are called “holy,” for they are set apart from all other writings. The Bible is indeed unique from all other writings. You see, the prophets did not just sit down and decide to write books. The impetus for the writing came from God Himself. The prophets were God-breathed and led along as they wrote down their prophecies concerning the coming Messiah. This is stated in 2 Peter 1:21, “for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.”

Listen friend, God put His promises down in writing. Often when we make promises to do something, people want us to put in down in writing. They want us to sign upon the dotted line. For our sakes, God was willing to put His promises down in writing.

Again, one main point we draw from this is the fact that the promises of salvation found in Scripture are reliable. You can believe the Bible, and the promises of the Bible. God’s Word is true, because God is true. Therefore, you can stake your eternity on God being true to His promises. The Messiah was promised by God. And you can be sure that God has kept His promises.

Next we see that:

## II. THE GOOD NEWS OF SALVATION WAS MADE POSSIBLE BY JESUS

Notice in v.3 that the promises of God in the prophets were “concerning His Son.” In the last of v.4 Paul identifies God’s Son as “Jesus Christ our Lord.” Thus, in v.3ff Paul defines for us the primary subject of the gospel. The gospel is concerned with Jesus. He is the sum and substance of the gospel; He is its central theme. There is no good news apart from Jesus Christ. Salvation comes through Jesus. Paul’s focus at this point is about the person of Jesus, who He is, and not so much *here* about what He has done. But who He is of primary importance.

Notice how Jesus made the promise of good news a reality:

A. He Was Made of the Seed of David - In v.3 Paul says that Jesus “was born of the seed of David according to the flesh.” The word translated “born” is literally “made” or “became” of

the seed of David. That is a statement of transition from one state to another. That implies His pre-existence, doesn't it? The second person of the Trinity became flesh from the seed of David. God became man! His mother was Mary, a direct descendant of King David. You see, in order to be the Messiah, He had to come from the seed of David. That was predicted by the prophets (2 Sam. 7:12-13; Ps. 89:3-4, 24; Isa. 11:1-5; Jer. 23:5-6; 33:14-16; Ezek. 34:23-24; 37:24). Luke's Gospel traces the genealogy of Jesus from David to Mary. Thus, Jesus fulfilled the Messianic promises.

He also took on human flesh in order that He might die in our place, bearing our sins on the cross. He knew that was the only way God could both forgive and satisfy His holy wrath against sin.

Not only does the fact of our Lord's Davidic ancestry qualify Him to be our Savior, but also our Lord. God promised that the Messiah would rule from the throne of David. Jesus has the right to rule our lives as well.

Notice what else was necessary for Jesus to make the good news possible for us:

B. He Was Declared the Son of God - Paul says in v.4 that Jesus was "declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness." The word rendered "declared" (*horizo*) is the word which elsewhere in the New Testament means to "determine," "appoint," "ordain." It might be possible to derive the meaning "declare" from its use in the sense of "mark out" as in "mark out the boundaries." This does not mean that Jesus *became* the Son of God as at some point, but that the resurrection was the clear demarcation of the fact that Jesus Christ is indeed the Son of God. His divine sonship was proved and made apparent by the power of His resurrection. As clearly as the horizon divides the earth from the sky, so the resurrection divides Jesus from the rest of humanity. Before, during the days of His flesh, His full deity and power were veiled and hidden. That is the very reason most people rejected Him, because He would not display His power to conquer Rome and set Israel free. But if there was ever any question that Jesus was the Son of God, His resurrection from the dead should have ended it. If Jesus had been a phony, you can be sure that God would not have raised Him from the dead. The apostle is dealing with some particular event in the history of the Son of God incarnate by which He was ordained to a position of sovereignty and invested with power. This statement is similar with what Peter said in Acts 2:36, that by the resurrection God made Jesus "both Lord and Christ." Peter cannot be understood to mean that then for the first time Jesus became Lord and Christ. He is referring to the new phase of His messianic lordship.

As we put vv.3-4 together, we see that Jesus was shown to be the God-man. In Him is absolute humanity and absolute deity.

The two natures of our Lord were demonstrated one time when a storm arose on the Sea of Galilee. Is there anything more human than that picture of the Lord tired and fast asleep in the boat? On this night a terrible storm arose, so great that even the experienced fishermen called it a great storm. But Jesus was so humanly tired that the storm didn't even awaken Him. But when the disciples did awaken Him, "He arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, 'Peace be still.' And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm." After that the disciples said, "What manner of man is this, that even the winds of the waves obey Him?" (Mk. 4:41). This incident could only describe a man who is both God and man.

So who is this man from Nazareth? Later He allowed Himself to be buffeted and spat upon. They took Him and drove nails through His hands and feet. After 6 hours He dismissed His spirit, and His lifeless body hung there upon the cross until the soldier came and thrust a

spear into His side. As blood and water poured out, there was no question about it: He was dead. Is *this* the Son of God? They put His lifeless body in a tomb, much like many others who had died. Is this the Son of God? The whole universe bends to see. There is a solemn stillness as it remains to be seen. Then, Paul triumphantly proclaimed in v.4 that He was “declared to be the Son of God with power ... by the resurrection from the dead.” Yes, on the third day, He arose! The angels came and rolled away the stone from the door. They did not do it in order to let the Lord Jesus out. They did it in order to let the disciples in. And by that resurrection the meek and lowly Jesus was declared to be the Son of God with power. By the resurrection He was vindicated and seen to be what He had ever declared Himself to be.

Indeed, the greatest demonstration of His deity was His resurrection from the dead in great power, with a new kind of body. The fact of the resurrection is attested by a host of witnesses. In fact, Paul wrote of over 500 witnesses that saw Jesus after His resurrection. Furthermore, how can you explain the tremendous psychological change in the disciples? How else can you explain the change in the day of worship from Saturday to Sunday?

This declaration was “according to the Spirit of holiness.” There is a contrast between “according to the flesh” in v.3 and “according to Spirit of holiness” in v.4. The relative weakness of His pre-resurrection state is contrasted with the triumphant power exhibited in His post-resurrection lordship. [Paul was either saying that the Holy Spirit was involved in the resurrection, or that a spirit of holiness characterizes upon His resurrection].

So here Paul sets forth two aspects of the personhood of Jesus Christ. Though He is one person, He belongs to both realms. Both truths were necessary for our salvation. He had to be man to reach us, but He had to be God to lift us up.

Suppose for a moment that a man owed an impossibly large debt at the bank. Then his friend came and said, “I want to be responsible for that debt.” But if his friend is poor, the gesture is meaningless. On the other hand, if the friend is a very rich professional ball player or businessman, then the offer becomes an act of grace in behalf of the debtor. The value of what he promises to do depends entirely on his own position and worth. Even so, only the Son of God could come forth to take the place of sinners and be wounded for their transgressions, and yet live forevermore. And as Heb. 7:25 says, “Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.”

Do you believe that Jesus Christ is the Messiah that God promised long ago? Do you believe that He rose from the dead, and that He is the Son of God? Well that leads to my next point:

### III. THE GOOD NEWS OF SALVATION MUST BE RECEIVED

God has done all He need to do to make the good news possible. God has made it possible for you to be saved from sin through Jesus Christ. He sent His Son to be our Savior. Now, you must respond to the good news. So what must you do? First:

A. Understand that Salvation Is by Grace - In v.5 Paul says, “Through Him we have received grace...” Though there may be a close link between grace and apostleship here, I will focus at this point on the concept of God’s grace.<sup>1</sup> Paul had to experience God’s grace before he could serve as an apostle. The good news is that salvation is by grace. “Grace” refers to the

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<sup>1</sup> Grace can refer to the divine enablement to perform the duties of an apostle, or the grace gift of apostleship (15:15).

unmerited favor of God. By His grace He is willing to give us what we need, rather than what we deserve. The promise of salvation is not something we work for; it is something we receive. If any individual thinks that he should go to heaven by natural right, or by good works, he has never understood either the holiness of God or the sinfulness of man. Paul was never forgetful of the grace by which he had been saved. It is significant that in this letter which has so much to say about grace, Paul mentions grace so early.

So don't try to work for salvation. Instead:

B. Receive Salvation by Faith – In v.5 Paul mentions “obedience to the faith.” Not only does he mention grace very early in this epistle, but also faith. The good news is that we are saved by faith, according to Romans chapters 3-5. In order to be saved from sin, you must believe the Gospel. Believe that Jesus died for your sins. Believe that He is the Son of God. Place your trust in Jesus.

What kind of faith is it that saves? Well Paul gives a good clue here. The words translated “obedience to the faith” are literally “obedience of faith.” It is the obedience that faith in Jesus produces.<sup>2</sup> We are not saved in order to have a set of theological principles in our heads. We are saved in order to surrender our lives to Christ as Lord. As we have seen, He sits upon the throne of David; He is the Son of God, and we are to obey Him. Since Jesus Christ is our Creator & Savior, He is Lord. Therefore, we should serve Him, and obey Him. Furthermore, in the Great Commission Jesus commanded His disciples to make disciples, “teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you” (Mt. 28:20). Eph. 2:10 says we are saved “unto good works.” Faith, if it does not manifest itself in works of obedience, is dead. James 2:20 says, “faith without works is dead.” People who say they believe and then live a life of disobedience do not possess genuine saving faith.

Paul understood that true faith leads to obedience. Notice in v.1 that he identifies himself as “a bondservant of Jesus Christ.” Slaves were very common in the Roman Empire, and Paul was willing to use that term to identify his relationship with Jesus Christ.

Is there a general pattern of obedience to Christ in your life? Do you have a servant's heart? Do you desire to please God by serving your fellow man? If not, can you say that you have truly believed in Christ?

There is one area of obedience that Paul mentions in this text, and this leads to my last point: [Review 1<sup>st</sup> 3 points, then:]

#### IV. THE GOOD NEWS OF SALVATION MUST BE PROCLAIMED<sup>3</sup>

Paul certainly understood his own obligation to proclaim the good news. In v.1 he said he was “called to be an apostle.” The word “apostle” literally means, “one who is sent.” An apostle is someone who was commissioned to carry a message. Thus, Paul was a missionary who went all over the Roman Empire proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ.

Some have a special calling to be a preacher or missionary. Paul said he was “called to be an apostle.” He did not presumptuously choose the office for himself. It is by the call of God that he became an apostle. He affirmed that he did not appoint himself; he was not appointed by some group; he was called and appointed to be an apostle by God Himself. And so what he writes here

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<sup>2</sup> According to Robertson, this is a subjective genitive. The same phrase is found in 16:26.

<sup>3</sup> If the sermon is too long, omit this point. This topic will be covered in the message on 1:16-17.

in Romans is from God! It is not the Gospel invented by Paul, but given to Paul, that he may proclaim it to others.

We need to keep in mind that we are not to invent the good news. We are to faithfully present the truths of the Gospel.

Furthermore, Paul says in the last of v.1 that he was “separated to the gospel of God.” The word has the idea of being set apart for a specific task or purpose. This is a further explanation of what it was to be called into apostleship. The word here (*aphorizo*) literally refers to separating by marking out a boundary. God put a boundary between Paul’s new life and work and his old life and work. Paul was not to cross back into his old life. All bonds of interest and attachment alien or extraneous to the promotion of the gospel have been cut asunder. Now he is to invest all his energy and interest in the cause of the gospel.

Now notice in v.5 that “we have received grace and apostleship.” Since he uses the plural, Paul may be including the Roman believers in that statement. They, too, have been called to go and share the good news of Jesus Christ. At times the term “apostle” can be used in the broad sense of any believer who heeds God’s call to be a witness or missionary (cf. 16:7; Acts 14:14).

According to v.5 the good news is that this gospel is for “all nations.” We have an obligation to get the Gospel out to all nations. We cannot rest, we cannot stop praying, we cannot stop giving, and stop going, until everyone in every tribe and nation has had an opportunity to hear the good news of Jesus Christ!

**Conclusion:** Is God calling someone here today to preach or be a missionary? Will you answer God’s call to be a short-term missionary? Will you take the good news to someone who needs Christ, right here in our community?

Is there someone here today who still needs to receive the good news of salvation? The bad news is that sin both condemns and controls people. Sin brings sorrow and death. But God has good news. He loves us, and sent a Savior just as He promised. Jesus died on the cross to pay the penalty of our sin. He rose from the dead to prove that God had accepted His sacrifice, and to prove that He is indeed the Son of God. He has the power to save you, change your life, and give you eternal life.

Sources: Donald Grey Barnhouse, *Expositions of Bible Doctrines Taking the Epistle to the Romans as a Point of Departure*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952); F.F. Bruce, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: The Epistle of Paul to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963); Bruce Corley & Curtin Vaughan, *Romans: A Study Guide Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976); John MacArthur, Jr., *Acting on the Good News: Study Notes on Romans 1:1-16* (Panorama City, CA: Word of Grace Communications, 1987); John Murray, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1965); Larry Pierce, *Online Bible [CD-ROM]* (Ontario: Timnathserah Inc., 1996). Other sources listed in the footnotes. Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from *The New King James Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982).

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