

Paul: The Gospel Man

"The Right Road"

Romans 1:1-4

February 10th, 2008

We covered most of the Scripture for our text in the last chapter. I want to continue and expound on some of the points as we continue on "The Right Road."

Scripture

"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 concerning His son who was descended from David according to the flesh 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."

In this church we have a man named Chuck Betts, who is affectionately called the Candy Man. Very few of our people know his first name, because he always seems to have a bag of candy in his hands. Not just a little bag of candy, a BIG bag of candy. Once Chuck discovers what kind of candy you like best, you can be sure that he will have that kind of candy in his bag. I marvel sometimes at what percent of his family budget actually goes to candy! Chuck is not buying candy for himself; he is buying it for others. He is passionate about candy. He is passionate about making sure we each get a piece of candy.

A Consecrated Man—"Set apart for the gospel of God"

Paul was just as passionate, yet not about candy. He was passionate about the gospel. He has already told us in verse 1 that he is a bondservant, or a chained man. He also said that he was called to be an apostle, or a called man. Finally, he said that he was set apart for the gospel, or a consecrated man. We did not go in depth on the third aspect of Paul's identity in the

last chapter. I want to begin with this last statement that Paul uses to identify himself to the saints in Rome: "*Set apart for the gospel.*"

The Greek word for ***set apart*** was carefully chosen by him, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, because of his strong background in the Old Testament Scriptures. It was a word with deep, rich meaning in the Old Testament. In Leviticus 20:26, when God called Israel to be His people, God said "*You are to be holy to me because I, the LORD, am holy, and I have set you apart from the nations to be my own.*" (NIV) Israel was set apart from all of the other nations to belong to God. According to Exodus, God told His people to take every first born, whether man or beast, and set them apart as His. He also ordained the first fruit of their crops to be set apart for Him. From the 12 tribes of Israel, God set apart the tribe of Levi as a priestly tribe. Throughout the Old Testament, we see God *setting apart* certain people or things from their ordinary use, to an odd use.

The Pharisees

The word ***Pharisee*** is derived from that very word. It means "to be a separated one, or a set apart one." Paul claimed to be a Pharisee before he became a Christian on the road to Damascus.

In the history of the Pharisees, the children of Israel had begun to stray from the Law of God, so a group of men got together to form a club. This club would honor and keep the Law of Moses. They set themselves apart, from how the other Israelites walked, to the Law. By the time Jesus came, there were at least 6000 Pharisees living in Israel, and membership was at an all-time high. These were the guys who were not going to be like the regular Israelites. They were set apart to keep God's Law. When they walked down the streets, they prided themselves on the aspect of not being like them. The Pharisees had been set apart to the Law, but they forgot who the Lawgiver really was. They had built their entire life on judging themselves on a code of conduct called the Law.

Does this sound familiar? It is really easy to pledge your allegiance to a code of conduct, or a set of beliefs. If you are not careful, just like the Pharisee, when you realize what you have been set apart from, you will start measuring yourself by what you no longer do that everyone else does.

There is a moving among the people of God today to be just like that. Some Christians are practicing their Christianity by checking off a list of things they are doing, and what they are not doing.

Remember, *set apart* is carefully chosen by Paul. He knew the aspects of a separated life. He sees himself by not only what he is separated from, but what he is separated to, or for, which is the gospel of God. In sharing how passionate he is about the gospel, Paul is going to teach three things in verses 2-4.

- **The Gospel is of God** (verse 1)
- **It was promised in the Old Testament Scriptures** (verse 2)
- **The Gospel Concerns God's Son** (verses 3 and 4)

The Gospel of God

The scholars say that this preposition, "of", can refer to one of two things. It can denote origin, which means the gospel is from God, or it can denote subject, which means it is about God. So, he is either saying the gospel is from God or about God. Sometimes I think the scholars are too critical. I do not think we have to choose whether it is from God, or about God. I believe the gospel is from God, and it is about God at the same time. The word ***gospel*** means "good news." The good news that we have is from God. It is not man-based, neither is it man-centered. It is from God, and it is about God, and it is God-centered. The gospel is the good news of how God makes a man right with Himself. Paul tells us that God makes a man right with Himself through the person of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Salvation is not in adherence to a book, or adherence to a plan, but it is adherence to the person of Jesus Christ. The gospel is not about man, it is about God and His desire to make man right with Him. He is the only true God, and there is only one way to be made right with Him, and that is Jesus. Christianity is not a religion; it is about having a relationship with the living God.

Many are slowly bringing Christianity into the same category of Mohammed, and Confucius, and Buddhism. When we forget what the good news is, it can be made into a religion. The emphasis becomes about the followers

following the *teachings* of the teacher. That is what happens when you make Christianity a religion. Your pursuit is teaching and knowledge. You want to know about God, and think the more you know about Him, the more pleasing you will be to Him. That is not Christianity. It is about the followers following the *Teacher*. It is not about following the teachings of Christ, it is about following Christ! Once you follow Him and become passionate about Him, you will want to know who He is, what He believes, and then you will bring yourself under His teachings. You will know the Teacher, not just about His teachings. The gospel is about what God did for the followers, not what the followers do for God. You should not follow the teaching so that God will do something for you because of what you have done for Him. A Christian should live his life following the Teacher because of what He has done for us. Our life's service and works should flow out of a relationship, not a code of conduct. When you become a gospel man or woman, you become person driven, rather than performance driven. We are person oriented, instead of tradition or ritual oriented. Your drive is your living relationship with Jesus Christ. If you are a gospel man, you will perform, but your performance is not your basis for a relationship with Him. It is a reflection of your relationship with Him.

Promised in the Old Testament Scriptures

The good news that Paul was preaching was not new. It was actually old news. It seems like everyone is looking for something new. We do not need anything new! We need to get back to the good news, which was promised before the foundation of the world, and was revealed through the prophets in the Old Testament. When Jesus appeared, it had already been promised and revealed. As a matter of fact, I believe the good news of the gospel is as old as the foundation of the earth. The gospel was here before the founding of the world! Paul calls the Old Testament the Holy Scriptures, but it was the only testament of God at the time of his writing. Our Old Testament today conforms to the Jewish Bible, but we have broken it up into 39 books, while they only had 22 to 25 books. Paul was confident that he could go into the synagogue at Thessalonica, and open up the Jewish Bible and reason with the Jews that Jesus was the Messiah. Paul could write to the Church at Corinth, and confidently give the gospel. He could also write to Timothy and tell him to continue on since he had known the Sacred Writings from childhood, which are able to make wise

him unto salvation through faith in Jesus. Paul could take his Old Testament and preach Jesus Christ and the gospel.

In John 5:39, Jesus was having a confrontation with some Jews, and He said, "*You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me.*" In verse 46 He said, "*If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me.*" He knew the Jews were diligent to study the Old Testament because they believed eternal life was in that book. Jesus told them that eternal life was not in a book, the book was written about Him. I will say again, eternal life is not in a book and not in a plan; it is in the person of Jesus Christ.

After Jesus was buried and raised on the third day, two of His disciples were on the road to Emmaus, and Jesus appeared to them. Their eyes were constrained so they could not recognize Him. He heard their conversation and asked why they were so sad. They told Him about this guy Jesus, who they thought was a prophet from God, and how they had pinned all of their hopes on Him, but He had died. They told Him that this was the third day and some women had gone to the tomb and He was gone. Instead of these disciples being excited, they were downcast. In Luke 24:25, Jesus said, "*Oh foolish ones, and slow of heart.*" He was asking why they were so sluggish to believe the prophets and all the things they had written concerning Him. Then in verse 27, it said that He opened the Scriptures, and beginning from Moses and all of the prophets, He expounded in every Scripture concerning Himself. Now, scholars say there are 330 different prophecies concerning Jesus. These two disciples were with Jesus, and did not recognize Him, and He just scolded them for not believing in the Old Testament. He started with Genesis and went through the book of Malachi and showed them all of these places of records concerning Him. One of the disciples turned to the other and said, "*Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?*" The Bible does not record his answer, but I just have to believe the other guy said yep, I had the same thing happen to me! The gospel is not new, it is old! I have shown you many times that we could start from Genesis, all the way through Malachi and see Jesus in every book of the Old Testament.

- **Jesus of the Old Testament**

Genesis-the Promised Seed

Exodus-the Passover Lamb

Leviticus-the Offering that was made on the Day of Atonement

Numbers-the Brazen Serpent

Deuteronomy-the Prophet greater than Moses

Joshua-the Pioneer of our salvation

Judges-the Judge of the earth

Ruth-our Kinsmen Redeemer

Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles-King of kings and Lord of Lords

Ezra-the Temple

Nehemiah-the Gate that leads into the city

Esther-the Provider of my salvation

Job-our Living Redeemer

Psalms-our Shepherd

Proverbs-Friend that sticks closer than a brother

Ecclesiastes-Creator to remember in the days of your youth

Song of Solomon-the Lover of our Soul

Isaiah-the virgin born, Suffering Servant

Jeremiah-the Righteous Branch

Lamentations-the One whose compassions are renewed each morning

Ezekiel-the Son of man

Daniel-the Son of God, the fourth person in the fiery furnace

Hosea-the Son called out of Egypt

Joel-pours out His Spirit upon all flesh

Amos-the Reconstructed Tabernacle of David

Obadiah-ushers in the Day of the Lord

Jonah-Prefigured in His death, burial, and resurrection

Micah-born in Bethlehem of Judea

Nahum-my Stronghold and my Refuge in the day of trouble

Habakkuk-the Holy One of Israel

Zephaniah-brings in the Kingdom blessings

Haggai-the Chosen Servant of Yahweh

Zechariah-stands on the Mount of Olives, the Headstone of the corner

Malachi-the Son of Righteousness who rises with healing in His wings

We do not have new news, we have old news! Jesus Christ, as the person of God coming to make a man right with Him, was not a second choice of God because man blew it in the garden. He was the first and only choice! The only reason God redeemed us is because of the person of Jesus Christ, and it reveals our God to us.

The Gospel Concerns God's Son

The gospel is good news, not only because it is of God, and promised in the Old Testament, but because it concerns His Son. I talk a lot about my Faxon education. That is not a seminary...it was my elementary school on the eastside of Calloway county. I happen to think we were way ahead of the game on the eastside in certain areas. From an early age, I can remember grammar class. I had some old fashioned teachers that believed you should learn how to diagram English sentences. I was quite good at it. I never did like literature, but I loved grammar. As I began to seek more education, I discovered that what I was taught in English class prepared me more than anything else for my study of Greek in Bible college and seminary. I learned that in English, if you are to be an effective communicator, you have to speak in short, simple sentences. Well, Paul did not know English...he broke all of the rules of English grammar. Verses 1-7 are one long sentence in the original Greek. Turn in a 126 word sentence to your English teacher and see what happens! You will not get an A. Because of that, some of us struggle with understanding Paul. He starts a thought, and then he modifies the thought. Then, he modifies the modifier of the thought. Then, he modifies the modifying thought to the thought. By now you are thinking, *what in the world is he saying?* Therefore, I have taken these verses and reduced it to the three main parts:

1. I am set apart for the gospel of God.
2. It concerns His Son.
3. His Son is Jesus Christ, our Lord.

The words: *Son*, *Jesus*, *Christ*, and *Lord*, are four very special words that Paul uses to talk about the gospel.

- **Son**

When he uses the word *Son*, he is speaking about the unique relationship that Jesus has to God, the Father. It is basically teaching that Jesus has

always been the 2nd person of the Trinity. The Son is co-equal with God. He is fully God, and has always been God. There has never been a time when God the Father, did not have God the Son, right there with Him. Grab a strong hold on this! There are people who meet in the name of Jesus who do not honor Him as the 2nd person of the eternal Godhead. He is the Son.

- **Jesus**

The name *Jesus* is referring to His humanity. When He was born, He received the human name Jesus, signifying He was a man. The name Jesus means "God is our Savior."

- **Christ**

The name *Christ* speaks of Jesus' Messianic office. It refers to the same person as the Jewish Messiah. Both names mean "Anointed One." When we say the gospel concerns God's Son, the 2nd person of the Godhead, He is the fulfillment of all of the Old Testament Scriptures. He is God's anointed Messiah.

- **Lord**

Lord is sometimes used in Greek to talk about a master. But the Greek word *Lord* translates the Hebrew word ***Adonai***. Paul and the New Testament writers used the same word to talk about Jesus, the 2nd person of the Godhead, in the same way they referred to Yahweh of the Old Testament: as the sovereign Lord of the universe.

The God-man

When we talk about the gospel, we are talking about the God-man. We are talking about Jesus being fully God, and fully man. Paul is going to show us Jesus according to the flesh and Jesus according to the spirit of holiness in verses 3-4. Paul parallels an aspect of Jesus as the seed of David, with an aspect of Jesus as the Son of God. In verse 3, it calls Him the seed, or descendant of David. In verse 4, that is contrasted with the Son of God in power. The verb used in verse 3 to talk about the Son "*was descended*", means He was made, or He became. In verse 4, the verb says "*He was declared*", or was appointed. Verse 3 contrasts "*according to the flesh*" with "*according to the spirit of holiness by His resurrection from the dead*"

in verse 4. Verse 3 is talking about a certain aspect of Christ, and verse 4 is talking about another aspect of Christ.

When we first look at this, it is easy to think that one is talking about Jesus as man, and the other is talking about Jesus as God. He truly was the God-man. On His mama's side, He was the seed of David. Through Mary, He can trace His lineage back to David. The verb that means "was made" means that as a man, He became who He had never been. The 2nd person of the Trinity, the Son of God, at the moment of His birth became a human, just like you and I. Up to that point God had never been a human. There is no humanness in God. God is fully God. But something extraordinary happened. God, in real time, became a real man just like you and I. According to the New Testament, He had to be man because He could not be our High Priest if He did not suffer like we suffer, and was not tempted like we are tempted. So, do not ever believe that as Jesus, the man, His life was rigged! When He got into a situation, He was not different from us; He was just like us and took the full brunt of temptation! Yet, where we fail, He went a little farther. He is fully man. Yet, at the same time he was fully man, He was still who He had always been, the 2nd person of the Godhead! Jesus never ceased to be who He had always been when He became who He had never been. He is the God-man!

No Ordinary Man

We see in Scripture that He was no ordinary man. When the disciples were questioned on why Jesus did not pay taxes, Peter asked the Lord. Jesus told Peter they had better pay the tax and told Him to go get his fishing pole. Of course, this would have been a net. He told Him to cast the net and there would be a shekel for the tax in the mouth of the first fish he got out of the net. Is that an ordinary man? No...

In Mark chapter 4, Jesus had been ministering and He lay down in the belly of the boat and falls fast asleep. He is sleeping really well and a storm started raging, and it was so bad the boat was being tossed. As a man, Jesus is exhausted and tired and fast asleep. The fishermen are scared to death! They go and wake Him up, and the Man, who was dead tired, stands up in the boat and says to the wind, "*Peace be still!*" The storm calmed. I ask you, is that an ordinary man? No...

The Man who hung on that cross in Luke 23, fully bearing the wrath of God and the human agony of being beaten to within an inch of His life, and has now been hanging on a cross for hours, turns to one of the repentant thieves and says, "*Today you will be with Me in Paradise.*" I ask you, is that an ordinary man? No...

Proven in Power

He is the God-man. After saying all of that, I say this...that is not what Paul is speaking about in this passage, even though everything I just said is true. If we look at everything in the passage on the surface level, without really digging into it, that is what we will believe. We will think it is talking about the full humanity and the full divinity of the Christ. But I do not believe that is what it is talking about. In verse 3, it is talking about the incarnation of Christ. Yes, it is talking about how the Son of God became a man, and walked on this earth according to the flesh. In many regards, He was limited in the flesh just like we are. He was "die-able." In the flesh, He could die. But this passage tells us that His deity was proven in His death and resurrection.

In a canonistic passage of Scripture, Paul tells the Church in the book of Philippians that Jesus did not think it robbery to be equal with God, but laid aside the prerogative of deity and became a man. Paul will say in Romans chapter 8 that what the Law could not do, in that it was weak, God did by sending His Son in the likeness of sinful flesh. As a man, He humbled Himself. As a human being in the flesh, He went to a cross, and died the most horrible death known to man. They killed Him. Yes, that is true, but there is also a sense in which they did not kill Him. He willfully laid His life down. When they took Him off of that cross and laid Him in that Palestinian tomb, the full weakness of the flesh was disposed. He had died.

Some did not really realize who He was in His incarnation. Those who had followed Him for three years ran when He died. Those who had believed that He was who He had said He was were so shaken by the death that they do not even go to the tomb on the third day, they stay huddled. But something happened. Jesus, who went down in the flesh, was suddenly resurrected from the dead. Philippians teaches that the Son humbled Himself, even to the point of death. Therefore, God highly exalted Him, and gave Him the name above every name, so that at the name Jesus,

every knee should bow, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. When He was resurrected, He was resurrected as, and proved to be, the Son of God in power! He did not become the Son of God at the resurrection like He became human at His birth; He had always been the Son. We know that He is the Son because when they laid Him down, God raised Him up! And when God raised Him up, He exalted Him to the right hand throne of God. According to Peter in Acts chapter 2, when He sat down, He sat down on the throne of David. Right now, in the exalted state, He reigns over His eternal kingdom. Every knee should bow before Him, and every tongue should confess that He is Lord!

This is not an invitation. It is a summons; it is a command. You should turn from a life of sin and cling to the cross of Jesus Christ as the only hope of your salvation. The resurrection of Jesus ushered us into a new way of living. We do not live by a code of conduct, tradition or rituals. We live empowered by the Spirit of God to follow the person of Jesus Christ until death. The life we live is not one of legalism, frustration, bondage, or condemnation. We are set free to be who God has called us to be, and that is His *set apart* ones! Our life should say that we are passionate about the person of Jesus.