

November 17, 2014

Romans 1:1 (NASB), ***“Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God...”***

I have been very undisciplined in the writing of this daily devotional and therefore it has been anything but “daily.” With this in mind I began to consider some ways for me to get back on track and to hopefully minister in the truth to you. The letter that the apostle Paul wrote to the Romans kept coming into focus as I considered this. With this in mind we are going to embark together on what will most likely turn out to be a fairly lengthy study of at least the first chapter of Romans. When we get through we will reevaluate and either continue on or take a break from Romans.

In John MacArthur’s excellent commentary on Romans he rightly points out that some of the greatest and most influential revivals in church history have happened as a result of this epistle. He cites Augustine who in 386 A.D. contemplated Romans 13:13-14 which says, ***“Not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts.”*** Augustine later wrote, “No further would I read, nor did I need; for instantly, as the sentence ended, - by a light, as it were, or security infused into my heart, - all gloom of doubt vanished away.”

Martin Luther who was a German monk in the order which was named after Augustine was teaching his students at the University of Wittenburg about the book of Romans. As he carefully studied the text he became more and more convicted about the central theme of the epistle which is justification by faith. These are but a few examples of the great influence the The Letter of Paul to the Romans has had on the church and on Christianity in general.

Romans is a book about the good news of God. The bad news is mankind's sin and the results of that sin. Both the results in this life and the result of eternal separation from God as a result of a life of sin. In chapter 1 verses 1-7 we see seven aspects of the good news of Jesus Christ.

The first aspect is that Paul was a preacher of the Good News. In the apostle Paul God called a uniquely qualified man to be His spokesman. Paul was an extremely gifted and for his time a very well educated man. Paul was a Jew but had grown up in Tarsus which was a Greek city and had been exposed to a Greek education. He could speak both Hebrew and Greek and this enabled Paul to preach the gospel to all kinds of people in the Roman world.

In this very first verse of this letter Paul identifies some important things about himself and how he viewed himself. First of all he refers to himself as a ***“bond-servant”*** or in the Greek a *doulos*. A *doulos* was a slave; in fact there is no other way that this word is translated in the New Testament. The idea was that of subservience and it was sometimes used to describe someone who voluntarily served others. The apostle Paul had given himself completely in love to his Master who had saved him on that road to Damascus from sin and death. All true Christians are in essence a *doulos* of Christ. In

Romans 6:17-18 it says, ***“But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.”*** We have exchanged the slavery of sin for slavery to the Son of God.

The second important thing about Paul was that He was ***“called.”*** Verse 1b says, that he was ***“called as an apostle.”*** Why does this matter? Because it establishes the authority of Paul’s ministry. This position that Paul was in was not of his own doing. He did not volunteer for this office, nor was he elected by fellow Christians. He was called by God so he was divinely called by the Lord Jesus Christ.

God.” Paul was called and he was sent by God as an apostle and his entire life was then ***“set apart”*** for the service of the Lord. The concept of setting people apart is a familiar concept in the Old Testament. In Leviticus 20:26 it says, ***“You are to be holy to Me, for I the Lord am holy; and I have set you apart from the peoples to be Mine.”***

Paul was ***“set apart for the gospel of God”*** it says. The word ***“gospel”*** comes from the Greek word *euangelion* which is translated to mean “good news” or “glad tidings.” It is the good news that God will deliver us from our selfish sin, free us from our burden of guilt, and give meaning to life and make it abundant. The most important thing about ***“the gospel”*** is that it is ***“of God.”*** Paul wants to make it clear to his readers from the very first sentence of this epistle so that there would be no confusion about what Paul was going to be writing about in this letter. This letter is consumed with the good news of justification by faith in Jesus Christ alone.

Sometimes as we read the New Testament epistles we don’t think that there is much to consider in the opening verses. After all most of these are just mere greetings, but there is a tremendous amount of theological truth in these verses. The first verse of Romans is no exception. It reminds us that we are God’s servants, we are set apart for Him, and we are set apart because of and for the Good News of Jesus Christ.

We will continue our study of the remarkable book of Romans.